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# THE FIRST CHURCH AND SOCIETY



OF BRANFORD, CONN.



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CHURCH AUDITORIUM, EASTER, 1919

A HISTORY  
OF THE  
FIRST CHURCH AND SOCIETY  
OF  
BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT  
1644-1919

BY  
J. RUPERT SIMONDS

THE TUTTLE, MOREHOUSE & TAYLOR CO.  
NEW HAVEN, CONN.

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TO HIS MANY BRANFORD FRIENDS, IN RECOGNITION  
OF THEIR REPEATED KINDNESSES DURING THE  
PERIOD WHEN IT WAS HIS PRIVILEGE TO  
OCCUPY THE PULPIT OF THEIR HISTORIC  
CHURCH, THE AUTHOR WOULD GRATE-  
FULLY DEDICATE THIS RECORD OF  
THEIR UNUSUAL AND GODLY  
HERITAGE



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## FOREWORD

It is always an interesting experience to endeavor to relive the days which are long since gone, and it has been an unusually fascinating one, to the author, to follow thru, in spirit, the growing life of this historic church. Never a dull page has he found in its annals, and it will be the fault of the raconteur, and not of his material, if there be dull pages in this little book. He has endeavored simply to retell the story which unfolded itself to him as, day by day, he thumbed the pages of the ancient records, and supplemented their narrative with stray details, gathered from scattered books. It is his hope that, in weaving the tale together and in striving to give sequence to its chronology, and perspective and emphasis to its body, that he may not have deprived the reader of too much of its original romance. The shaping of the tale has been a work of love, and the sole prayer of the author is that the reader may see what he has seen, and may realize the preciousness and the inspiration of his heritage. May his imagination be touched, and may he find, in these pages, no dull chronicle of unfamiliar men and days, but a living presentation of the deeds and characters of his own fathers.

In offering this story to the Branford people and their friends, the writer makes no apology for his wholesale borrowing of former material, nor even for using the veritable language of others.

Wherever he has found any fact of interest, he has incorporated it shamelessly in his narrative. Gladly he offers the only restitution possible, his gratitude, to those to whom he has thus become a debtor. Especially does he desire to express his appreciation of and indebtedness to a former pastor of this church, the Reverend Elijah C. Baldwin, for his scholarly researches and labors, without the results of which much of this book could never have been written.

In concluding this word of introduction, the writer would congratulate the church in Branford, upon this, their Two Hundred Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, and express his sincere prayer that the Great Head of the Church would crown their rich heritage, of years gone by, with many a future year of richest blessing.

J. RUPERT SIMONDS.

May 16, 1919.

## “THE PLACE OF THE TIDAL RIVER”

Nearly three centuries ago, there dwelt in this portion of New England a strong and numerous tribe of Indians, known to the early settlers as the Mattabesecks. Their chief was the mighty Sachem Sowheog who lived in an Indian fortress, on the top of a high hill, in the region known to us as Middletown. About him dwelt a powerful band of some five hundred warriors, whom he could summon instantly to do his bidding, by a blast upon his whistle. Now Sowheog had a son called Montowese, and it fell to his lot to be petty chieftain over the southwestern portions of his father's dominions; a region beautiful for hills and rock-bound bays, and famous for its hunting and its shellfish, and named, by the stream which alternately carries down fresh water from the hills, and floods back salt water from the Sound, Totokett—“place of the tidal river.”

Totokett was not densely populated in those days, and Montowese was ruler over but ten warriors and their families. But, tho the resident population was so scant, the place was even then a shore resort, and Indians from far and near came often for short sojourns, that they might fish and gather shell-fish. Sometimes these visitors were far from friendly, and hostile raids were not at all uncommon. To withstand these raids an Indian fort was built at Indian Neck, and in the repulsing of them we know that at least one sanguinary battle was

fought. So it may well be that Montowese was by no means sorry to receive, in December 1638, an offer for Totokett from the English Colony at New Haven. He appears to have regarded the sale not merely as a commercial transaction but also as binding to him, in a defensive alliance, the white men with their potent weapons. So the sale was made, the price being between twelve and thirteen pounds, and the deed given; Montowese affixing a bow and arrow and Sausounck a small tomahawk as signatures. And it is a happy thing to be able to record that neither then nor in any future time was there other than cordial friendliness between the settlers and the men of Montowese.

Totokett was now English property but not for some time was it much inhabited by English people. The inhabitants of New Haven came and went, hunted and fished, as had the Indians, but not yet were they sufficiently crowded in their own settlement to be thinking of moving elsewhere. The effort appears to have been to settle the new lands by inducing other colonists to come there from a distance rather than to people them by mere expansion. The first endeavor was to gain new settlers from England to become their neighbors. Accordingly we find upon their records: "Att a Gen<sup>l</sup> Court held the 1<sup>t</sup> of the 7<sup>t</sup> Moneth 1640. The plantatiō of Totokett is granted to Mr. Samuell Eaton for such friends as he shall bring ouer from olde England, and vpō such tearmes as shall be agreed betwixt himselfe & the comitty chosen to

that purpose, (namely) Mr. Eaton and the 4 deputies." Samuel Eaton was the brother of Theophilus Eaton, New Haven's governor. He went to England with the intention of arousing interest in the proposed colony but was persuaded to remain there and preach, settling at Durbenfield and Stockport. Thus this venture came to nought, tho it was not for some time that hopes of his return were given up and, at the General Court March 25, 1644, "Itt was ordered thatt they to whome the affayres of the towne is intrusted shall dispose of Totokett according as in their wisdome they see cause."

Meanwhile a certain Thomas Mulliner, or Moul-liner, had assumed squatter's privileges at Mulliner's Neck, now Branford Point; and a Thomas Whitway had located in that part of the district known now as Foxon. Mulliner may have settled even before the land was sold by the Indians and have made a separate bargain with them; we do not know. At any rate his right to remain was not contested, tho we suspect the New Haven people would have been glad to see him go, for he proved a troublesome neighbor and was summoned before the General Court several times for disorder, for contempt, and for breach of peace, as well as being a constant disputant concerning the boundaries of his lot. Whitway, on the other hand, appears to have been peaceable and of good conduct.

Some time in the year 1644, the date is most unfortunately not a matter of history, the following entry was made upon the records of the New

Haven Colony: "Totoket, a place fit for a small plantation, betwixt Newhauen and Guilford, & purchased from the Indians, was granted to Mr. Swayne & some others of Weathersfield, they repaying the chardge, w<sup>ch</sup> is betwixt 12 & 13£, & joyning in one jurisdiction w<sup>th</sup> Newhaven & the forenamed plantations, vppon the same fundementall agreement settled in Octob<sup>r</sup>, 1643, w<sup>ch</sup> they, duely considering, readjlye accepted." We now turn to the events leading up to this entry.

Ten years before the making of this record, a few adventurers, from Watertown, Massachusetts, settled at Wethersfield, near Hartford. A church was organized there in 1635. This church was at first without a pastor and, there being no settled minister, contentions arose concerning the filling of this important position. These contentions led to the formation of several parties in the church, each of which had its own candidate for the office. This divided state of affairs, having continued for several years, and matters constantly becoming worse, so that the whole settlement was divided into hostile factions, an appeal was made to Mr. Davenport, and the settlers of New Haven, for aid in reconciling their differences. Davenport and several others went to Wethersfield, where they soon perceived that the only hope of peace lay in a separation of the contending factions. Accordingly they advised that one or more of the parties should remove and form a separate settlement. Acting upon this advice, one group removed to Stamford, while

another and larger group decided to remove to Totokett. Undoubtedly they had been urged to locate there by the New Haven authorities, who saw in them the settlers whom they had long sought for their untenanted lands. At any rate the decision to locate there was a happy one for all, offering to the emigrants a new home close to an established settlement, and, at the same time, solving the problem which had existed, for the New Haven Colony, since the failure of Samuel Eaton to bring over colonists from England.

The new settlement was, by the terms of the sale, to be subject to the same laws and civil government as Stamford, Milford and Guilford, the other daughter settlements of New Haven. The outstanding feature of this political system was the absolute limitation of the franchise to such men of the community as were members of the recognized church. In the Hartford Colony, on the contrary, there was no such sharp limitation, and this difference in qualifications for the suffrage is the key to the understanding of the difficulty which long stood in the way of the union of the two colonies, and also to an intelligent interpretation of important subsequent events in the story of the Branford Church.

The boundaries of Totokett were fixed as follows: on the South, Long Island Sound; on the West, Stony River and the Great Pond (Lake Saltonstall), and thence north to the Wallingford line; on the North, a line about ten miles back

from the shore ; and on the East, a line commencing ten miles east of the Quinnipiac River, and running due north to the Wallingford line, which it met in the center of Pistepaug Pond. These boundaries have remained practically unchanged to the present time.



## THE PIONEER DAYS OF JOHN SHERMAN

The larger part of the Wethersfield people undoubtedly came to Totokett by water, journeying down the Connecticut River and along the shores of Long Island Sound. Some few, however, must have come overland, thru the wilderness, driving before them the flocks and herds. We do not know the time of their arrival. It may have been as early as the autumn of 1643; it may have been as late even as the early fall of 1644. Were it not for one troublesome court record we should feel certain that they first saw Totokett in the late spring, or early summer, of 1644. But that record appears as a considerable obstacle to this theory. Under the date of February 3, 1644, we read that the always troublesome Thomas Mulliner was bound over to keep the peace, "especially toward the inhabitants of Totokett." Now we have no record of there being any inhabitants of Totokett, other than Thomas Whitway and the Indians, and the latter would hardly seem to have been meant by the word, in this instance. Accordingly this record is strong evidence that the Wethersfield people were in Totokett in February. But, if this be true, they must surely have arrived sometime the previous autumn, for it seems quite incredible that the long journey from Wethersfield would have been undertaken after the setting in of the New England winter.

But such a supposition is not only unsupported

by any other evidence, but seems also at variance with such later records as do exist; which records deal with such matters of land allotments and preliminary organization as must have been the concern of a very new settlement, rather than of one more than a year old. The first entry on the town books is under date of June 18, 1644, and reads as follows, "This dai it is ordered that the meadow in this plantation shall be divided into 4 parts, and then divided by lott, viz: all the meadow that lyeth on the right hand side of the town that is earliest settled shall be in the first dividend, and all the meadow that lyeth by the river on the left side and all upwards from that place where it is considered a bridge must be, for the 2nd dividend; Also 3dly all the meadow that lyeth downe the river from the place where it was considered a bridge must be, and all that lyeth within the compass of that piece of ground called the plaine shall be in the 3rd dividend. 4thly all the meadow left beside in the towne that is knowne shall be in the 4th dividend. This meadow is to be bounded and prized by Robert Rose, William Palmer, Samuel Swaine, John Horton, Richard Harrison and Thomas Blatchley, with all convenient speede, and then the lott is to be cast."

The more plausible theory would seem to be that the little band of settlers set out from Wethersfield in April or May of 1644, and arrived in Totokett the latter part of May, or early in June. The court record, quoted above, would seem to refer either

to other squatters, like Mulliner and Whitway, or else, possibly, tho this seems unlikely, to a small group of pioneers which may have preceded the main body of settlers for the purpose of clearing some ground and preparing for the coming of the others.

Upon their arrival, the first work was to divide the land equably among the settlers. This was done by casting lots, according to the precedent of Hebrew custom, a practice often followed in New England town life. The Wethersfield people located almost entirely upon the west side of the river, leaving the lands upon the east for the use of the Indians.

It is interesting to recall the names of these first settlers of what is now the town of Branford, for many of them have been perpetuated, and will still be found in the Branford of to-day. These names were as follows: Samuel Swaine, William Swaine, John Plum, Richard Harrison, Thomas Blatchley, Robert Rose, John Linsley, Frances Linsley, William Palmer, Richard Mather, Sigismond Richalls, Thomas Sargent, Roger Betts, William Merchant, Thomas Lupton, Robert Abbott, Edward Tredwell, Jasper Crane, Lawrence Ward, Thomas Morris, Samuel Nettleton, John Norton, George Ward, John Hill, John Ward, Luther Bradfield, Thomas Fenner, Daniel Dod, Thomas Richards, Jonathan England, Richard Williams, John Edwards, Edward Frisbie, Robert Meeker, John Horton, Thomas Whitehead, and Richard Law-

rence. It is barely possible that John Sherman, who first ministered to them of the things of God, may also have been of this number, tho the apparently more trustworthy tradition is that he left Wethersfield some years earlier, in 1640, and went first to Milford, joining the Branford colony a few months after their arrival. Jasper Crane and the Wards came from New Haven.

John Sherman was Totokett's first minister. He was born in Dedham, Essex County, England, December 26, 1613. Having entered Emanuel College, of the University of Cambridge, he left it at an early age, because of Puritan tendencies. He came to New England, in 1634-5, and preached at Watertown, Massachusetts, as an assistant to Rev. George Philips. He was a famous preacher, a man of marked intellectual gifts; was the foremost mathematician in the colonies, and left many learned contributions to the astronomical sciences. His first sermon was preached at Watertown, for Mr. Philips. It was a Thanksgiving Day sermon, and was preached under a large tree. Several ministers heard it, and "wondered exceedingly to hear a subject so accurately handled by one who had never before performed any such public service." He soon removed to Connecticut, probably with the party which founded Wethersfield, and remained there a few years, impressing all who heard him with his marked ability. Thomas Hooker and Mr. Stone, the ministers in Hartford, said, in a clerical gathering, "Brethren, we must

look to ourselves and our ministry; for this young divine will outdo us all." Besides preaching he served as a magistrate and assisted in the organization of several towns and churches. He was married twice, his second wife being a Mary Launce, whom he met in the family of Governor Eaton of New Haven.

Although he lived in the third century before the promulgation of Rooseveltian theories, Sherman would have delighted the heart of that great American, for, in the fullness of time, he became the father of twenty-six children. Unfortunately infant mortality was so great in those days that it is highly probable that this generous family were never gathered about the table at one time. Or it may be that this was fortunate, for one wonders, seeing that ministerial salaries were smaller then even than now, how it would have been possible to provide the food wherewith to furnish so large a table. Moreover it would have been a somewhat difficult task to have transported a family of such proportions thru the New England wilderness as frequently as would have been necessitated by his migratory existence. John Sherman was at Totokett in the interval between the death of his first wife and the acquisition of his second. Consequently his courtship to Mary Launce may well have been the first romance of old Branford.

Mr. Sherman remained in Totokett two or more years, and then removed to his former home in Watertown and was minister to that church until

his death, at the age of seventy-two, in 1685. His first wife had died in New Haven, September 8th, 1644; his second survived him, living until the year 1710. His great-grandson, Roger Sherman, was one of the signers of our Declaration of Independence.

We know neither the exact date when John Sherman came to Branford, nor that of the organization of the church. The evidence would seem to indicate that Sherman came in the late September of 1644; very likely shortly after the death of his first wife. The first actual record of his presence, or of the existence of a church in Totokett, is found in the second entry upon the town records, which reads, "This dai it was ordered that Mr. Sherman should be allowed \* \* \* a year, to begin from the first of October, 1644." The word "allowed" is somewhat illegible, because of age, and the word which follows is entirely lost, but there can seem to be no reasonable doubt that what we have here is the record of a vote fixing the minister's salary, and that his period of service began on the date mentioned. Altho we can but conjecture as to the precise time when the settlers actually joined, by a common covenant, in a definite and organized Church, it is practically certain that at no time were they without some sort of public worship. The same spirit which moved the Plymouth Pilgrims to rest from their explorations, both on their first Sabbath in the harbor of Provincetown, and on that other Sabbath, on Clark's

Island, in Plymouth Harbor, would have made it impossible for the pilgrims to Totokett to have been for any time without the gathering of themselves together to worship God. The balance of probability appears to be in favor of the church having been formally organized very early in the life of the settlement, perhaps in the summer of 1644.

Very soon after their arrival the settlers set apart two plots of ground; the first for a Meeting House, and the other as the site of a house for a minister. Shortly after, the first Meeting House was erected, standing in what is now the south-west portion of the cemetery, probably in the large space which has been ever bare of stones. It was a small, unpretentious building, such as were common in those first days in the wilderness, and utterly unlike even the oldest churches of our time. Rough-hewn logs formed its walls, while the roof was thatched with the coarse sedge-grass from the river banks. In form it was "foursquare" like John's holy city, tho scarcely of the celestial dimensions. Possibly it may have been as much as thirty feet long and twenty wide, and four feet high; hardly a cathedral, yet no less, we may believe, a House of God. The floor was the bare, hard earth, the roof a simple pyramid of straw. Whatever windows there may have been were empty of glass, either stained or plain, tho possibly covered with glazed paper in effort to keep out the snow and wind of winter, and to keep in the vision of such

as might, conceivably, prefer the green of fields and trees and the summer sun to the dusty bareness of crude, dark walls. For pews, there were some few rude benches, each one a length of log supported at either end by stakes; for pulpit, a square, inornate box of boards.

The building was surrounded with a palisade of logs, six feet high, and bored at regular intervals, at the height of a man's head, with loop-holes for the muskets. During service one man always stood sentinel, at the entrance to the enclosure, while the other men of the congregation never had their muskets far from hand. The neighboring Indians were quite friendly but tribes from afar often made raids upon Totokett, and were inimical to the friendly Indians and to the English alike. Of all these hostile tribes the Mohawks were most dreaded. Later on a "trayned band" was organized, being a sort of militia company, in which every able-bodied man was obliged to serve. The members of this band wore a strange sort of armor, as a protection against the arrows of the Indians, a sort of cotton doublet padded like a quilt. It could hardly have given a military appearance to the company, but it was undoubtedly efficient. On April 5, 1687, the town presented the "trayned band" with a silk flag and, at the same time, gave them a negative encouragement by voting a very heavy fine for those guilty of non-attendance at drill.



There were no church bells in those days and, for that matter, no steeples in which to hang them. The hour for worship had, therefore, to be announced by other means. In some places in New England a conch shell was blown, in others a gun was fired, but at Totokett the people were called to church by the beating of a drum in the streets of the town; and one of the early town records deals with the expenditure of three shillings for a pair of drumsticks, while a later one records that George Baldwin was chosen for Constable "and to beat the drum on the Sabbath." He was granted a salary of thirty shillings.

When the old palisade was removed, some of the posts were used, by Samuel Russell, as fence posts. A few of them are still in existence. One was on exhibition in the church at the time of the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of its reorganization. Some others may still be seen about the town. A pair of goblets, carved from one of these timbers, was formerly in the possession of Mr. Plant.

Late in the year 1646, for the better protection against Indians, and to keep the cattle from straying, it was voted to build a five mile fence, enclosing the town. The fence was to be of logs, four feet and two inches high, and was to be completed by May first, of the following year. At the same time Frances Linsley was appointed "heard of cows and heifers," it being his duty to take all of the cattle

of the community out to pasture, each morning, and to collect them and bring them back each evening.

In the second entry on the town books, being the same as that recording the allowance to John Sherman, we read, "this dai it was ordered \* \* \* that John Plum shall keep the town's books." He, then, was the first town clerk, serving until his death, in 1648. He was followed by Michael Taintor who, in turn, was succeeded by John Wilford. Eleazer Stent was chosen in 1673 to assist Wilford. Stent collected the previous records, and copied them, and the first volume is in his handwriting.

It has been commonly believed that the earliest records of the Branford church are lost. This is probably, at most, only partly true. In the early days the records of church and town had no separate existence. The church was the town, and the same body which determined the conduct of church affairs determined also those of the community. The early town records, we have; and that they do not include more details concerning what occurred within the church may rather be because of omissions, due to the strenuous life of those days, than because of the loss of any manuscripts. When one pauses to consider, there are a multitude of important matters with which we should expect the town records to deal, matters concerning the purely secular aspects of town life, on which the records are equally fragmentary and vague. We

could wish that our forefathers had given us detailed and full accounts of those early days, but after all, were we dependent entirely upon the records of church and of the Society for information respecting our own times, ours would be a picture not much more complete than we now possess of those years long past.

The laws of the Totokett of those days were drawn from the Old Testament and the interpretation of the code was a literal one. Justice was not often touched with mercy, and punishments for offences were severe and certain. Like other New England communities Branford was equipped with pillory and stock and whipping post. These implements of justice were doubtless located, at first, close to the Meeting House; later being removed to "Whipping Post Hill" an eminence which stood on the present site of the Baptist Church. Judging that the Mosaic law dealt inadequately with certain problems of their time, the settlers supplemented it with much added legislation of their own. Restrictions as to conduct on the Sabbath, regulations regarding clothing, and careful supervision of the stranger within the gates, received special attention. June 24, 1650, a curfew law was passed providing that "If any man or woman, young or old, shall be taken by the watch abroad in the night after ten of the clock, and cannot give a sufficient reason therefore to the watch of their being abroad shall for every such fault pay 12 pence or other condigne punishment as the court shall require." One won-

ders how popular such a law would be in the Branford of to-day.

From time to time new settlers were added to the Totokett colony, the most noteworthy of whom was the Reverend Abraham Pierson, who came from Southampton, L. I., in 1645-6. Inasmuch as he was to be pastor of the church for twenty years, he deserves considerable attention.

## ABRAHAM PIERSON, PILGRIM AND APOSTLE

Abraham Pierson was born in Yorkshire, England, in the year 1613. He was a graduate of that mother of Puritans, Trinity College, Cambridge, completing his course in 1632. After receiving Episcopal ordination, he preached for a time in or near Newark, England. Apparently he was mastered by Puritan scruples for he came to Massachusetts, in 1639, and became a member of the Boston church. He soon removed to Lynn, where he was reordained, in accordance with New England custom, and became pastor of the church. In 1640, or it may be in 1641, Pierson and a portion of his church removed to Long Island. In May they endeavored to establish a settlement on the western end of the island but were prevented by the Dutch. They then removed to the eastern end and settled at Southampton. The reason for this removal is to be found in a profound conviction, on the part of Pierson, that active participation in civil government should be confined entirely to members of the recognized church. He believed that the church and the state should be synonymous. In the Massachusetts Bay Colony this strict limitation was not absolutely followed whereas, as we have seen, in the New Haven Colony church members only possessed the suffrage. He believed that a settlement on Long Island would be under the control of New

Haven. It soon developed, however, that his colony was, in reality, under the jurisdiction of the Connecticut Colony, which Colony held very liberal views as to the separation of church and state. Accordingly he, with a number of his congregation, again became Pilgrims, for the sake of conscience, and removed to Branford.

John Sherman having removed, probably in 1646, Pierson was chosen as minister and became the first regularly settled pastor of the church. September 22, 1650, "It was ordered that the ministers pay shall be brought each half year. For every milch cow he shall have two pounds of butter, in part pay each year; for the rest, for the first half year in beef, or pork, or Indian corn, or wampum; for the second half year in wheat and pease, good and marketable." He was also given a large portion of land, part of which was near the Totokett Hotel. His house stood near the site of the hotel. On February 24th, 1659, "at a town meeting it was granted by the consent of the town to Mr. Pierson, that he shall have the use of the whole five hundred pound lot that he has formerly used, which is the meadow of a two hundred pound lot that did not belong to his house when he bought it: that was granted to him for as long as he shall live in the town, and if he shall live in the town till his death, then it is given to his wife and his children for their use forever."

Mr. Pierson soon became popular in Branford, and under his direction and the impetus given the

settlement by the addition of new arrivals, the town began to take on a flourishing aspect. A smithy was built and equipped with bellows, and a smith invited to come from Guilford. A tide-mill was erected at the present location of the Branford Point bridge, but the greatest industrial venture was the starting of a smelting furnace, or "Bloomery." This was located at Great Pond, which thereupon became for the time "Furnace Pond" but later Lake Saltonstall. The ore, for the furnace, was obtained from North Haven and was a sort of "bog-iron." An iron works was built up around it; the first in the state. It would appear that the ore was brought from North Haven by water; by way of the Quinnipiac and the Farm, or Stony, rivers. To encourage this infant industry special privileges were allowed it by the town. The owners were permitted to cut all the wood from the public lands which might be needed for fuel, and to flood the lands about by raising the pond. A plant of some sort stood there for a long time after.

In the early sixties an especially large influx of new settlers occurred. Among these were Frances Bradley, Leonard Dix, Mica Fowler, Nathaniel Gunn, Gabriell Linco, George Page, John Potter (a blacksmith), and John Wilford.

In these days there was considerable friction between the men of the New Haven Colony and the Dutch of the New Amsterdam settlement. Some time in the early history of Totokett a party of Dutch traders had landed on the shores of the

river. Possibly they built a trading post; at any rate they remained long enough to give their name to that locality, and it has been known as Dutch House Wharf to this day. Fifty men from Totokett and New Haven were imprisoned by the Dutch, in 1651, for attempting to settle upon lands claimed by the latter in Delaware. When, in 1654, New Haven sent an expedition against the Manhadoes, as the Dutch were called, Totokett contributed eleven men towards the company of one hundred-thirty-three, and Pierson was chosen to accompany the expedition as chaplain. Mr. Pierson was often associated with Davenport, and others of the New Haven Colony, in their plans and activities.

The first marriage noted upon the records was that of George Adams to the Widow Bradfield, occurring in 1651. Sarah Page, a daughter of George Page, who was born May 28, 1666, has the honor of being the first infant whose name enters upon the records; tho her claim to the honor of being the first child of white parents to be born in Totokett would appear capable of being challenged. It is a strange coincidence that the first record of a death appearing on the pages of the town's books is the name of John Plum, who died in 1648, and who was the first to keep those books.

An insight into the nature of the personal possessions of those days is afforded by the inventories made of several estates at about that time. Only two of these estates was given a value of as much as one hundred pounds; two more were considered



to amount to some fifty pounds; three or four others were worth perhaps ten pounds; while the value of all the others listed was even less. In 1659, there was an epidemic of serious proportions in the settlement. We do not know what the sickness was, but we do know that, among others, Mr. Pierson and his wife were ill, and that while the former quickly recovered, the latter was ailing for some time.

By far the most interesting aspect of Abraham Pierson's ministry is the story of his missionary efforts with the Indians. A letter, written in September 1651 by the Commissioners for the United Colonies, to London, to the Society for Propagating the Gospel in New England, speaks of Pierson as studying the language of the Indians in order that he "might the better treat with them concerning the things of their piece." He spent several years in perfecting himself in the Indian tongue and was often called upon to act as an interpreter in the courts. In the year 1653, the Commissioners allowed him twelve pounds "towards his charge and pains in fitting himself to teach the Indians," and the following year, they increased this to fifteen pounds. The same year they wrote to the London Society that "one Catechism (Mr. Elliot's) is already printed, and Mr. Pierson is preparing another to suit these south west parts, where the language differs from theirs who live about the Massachusetts." The record of a meeting of the Commissioners, held in Plymouth, in

September 1656, states that "a letter from Mr. Pierson of Branford, date the 25th of August last was read, and some parts of a catechism by him framed and propounded to convince the Indians, by the light of nature and reason, that there is only one God who hath made and governeth all things, &c., was considered; and the Commissioners advise that it be perfected and turned into the Narragansett or Pequot language that it may the better be understood by Indians in all parts of the country— And for that purpose thay spake with and desired Thomas Stanton to advise with mr. Pierson about a fit season to meet and translate the same accordingly, without any unnecessary delay, that it may be fitted for and sent to the press; and they promise him due satisfaction for his time and pains. It was agreed that Mr. Pierson shall be allowed fifteen pounds for the pains he shall take in this work the year ensuing." Thomas Stanton was an Indian who had been taken to England and educated at the University of Cambridge.

Pierson's translation was completed some time before September 1657. It was decided to have fifteen hundred copies printed, and Jonathan Ince and Thomas Mayhew, the Nantucket missionary to the Indians, started for England with the manuscript. They were never again heard from, and it is believed that the ship was lost, with all on board. By the following September, 1658, Pierson had prepared another copy and it was decided that this should be printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The first sheet was completed, at Cambridge, before December 28th. It consisted of sixteen pages, and one copy was sent to England, where it was reprinted, and bound up in a pamphlet with letters from Endicott and John Elliot. The complete work came from the Cambridge press in some seven months. The volume was entitled, "Some Helps for the Indians, Shewing them how to Improve their Natural Reason, to Know the True God, and the Christian Religion." It was the first work of any resident of the Connecticut or New Haven Colonies which was ever printed. Only two copies of it are now in existence; one being in the British Museum, and the other belonging to the James Lenox Collection of New York. An excellent reproduction of it has been prepared by the Connecticut Historical Society and will be found, together with a full and detailed account of the history of its publication, in Volume III of the "Collections" of that society. The advice of the Commissioners that it be turned into Narragansett or Pequot was never followed, and it was printed in the language of the Quiripi Indians, who lived on the shores of Long Island Sound; the first and only work ever printed in their language.

The Catechism itself is extremely interesting, and will well repay the efforts of any who care to examine it. The text is of the interlinear sort, the Indian translation being in bold type, with the English equivalent, printed in smaller type, above every Indian word. We have no means of ascer-

taining how effectual it was in converting the Indians to the true Faith. Certainly its language is far from simple, and its arguments are so universally couched in the philosophical jargon of the schools that one suspects that the poor Indians must have been completely puzzled and convinced, if of anything, that the religion of the settlers must be one of awful and perplexing mysteries. Assuredly no man of this generation who does not possess a doctor's degree, from the department of philosophy of some learned university, can expect to follow the arguments from "nature and reason" which are set forth in this book. It is hardly any wonder that the Commissioners seem to have found it necessary to order that "6 yards of cloth should be distributed out of the mission funds to the principle men of the Wethersfield Indians as an encouragement to those who attend on Mr. Pierson and refrained from pow-wow-ing, and from laboring on the Sabbath," if his oral expositions were of the same order as his Catechism. But one suspects that they were not, or at least that the spirit of the man and the earnestness of his desire to win converts to his faith may have shone thru his obscure phrasing and have compensated for the lack of lucidity in his language. Certainly Branford church may well cherish with pride the history of his missionary labors. He takes his place by the side of Elliot and Mayhew, men in whose souls burned that apostolic fire which has sent forth Christians, from the first century on, burning with

fervent zeal to evangelize the world, and to proclaim the good tidings of the Christ to those who know Him not. We can never know how large a share the endeavors of Elliot and Pierson have had in making the Congregational Church in America a missionary body. And we more than suspect that Mr. Pierson's endeavors may have not lacked for immediate fruitfulness; that the personality of the man may have been far greater than the shortcomings of his catechism. One can only reverence the steadfastness of that great purpose which inspired him to aspire to prepare a book in an absolutely unknown tongue. Of a surety no pastor of Branford church has been more loyal to his Christian convictions, or has more painstakingly served his Master than Abraham Pierson, her second minister.

In June, 1667, Mr. Pierson and a large portion of the Branford community left Connecticut and founded a new colony in New Jersey. In order to understand the reasons for this removal it will be necessary to devote a little time to a consideration of certain developments in New England colonial history. It will be remembered that the qualifications for the suffrage in the Connecticut and in the New Haven colonies differed; the New Haven Colony requiring church membership as an absolute prerequisite, while, in the Connecticut Colony, any man "of good character, orderly walk, and with an estate of Thirty Pounds" could vote. All went well for awhile, for men could choose the colony

whose practice coincided with their convictions in which to settle. As we have seen, this is just what Mr. Pierson did, removing from Southampton, that he might escape the practices of the Connecticut Colony, and locating at Totokett, where only church members could vote, since Totokett was under the laws of New Haven. But, in 1662, a grave crisis arose. Up to this time no colony in New England had possessed a royal charter save that of Massachusetts Bay. But, in 1662, Charles II., then newly come to the English throne, granted a charter to the Connecticut Colony, and included the New Haven Colony within its limits and under its jurisdiction. Here was trouble indeed. New Haven contested the union with all her strength, and succeeded in postponing the inevitable until 1665, but, in that year, her efforts proved of no further avail and the union of the two colonies became actual. In this protest of the New Haven Colony Abraham Pierson took a very active part, for he was convinced that the admission of unregenerate persons to participation in state affairs could result only in disaster and in a return to those evils which the Puritan had forsaken England to escape; in the true church becoming subservient to a corrupt state. History has not sustained his theory, but we can admire that strong conviction, even tho it were fallacious, which led him forth, yet once more a pilgrim, to aid in the establishment of a third colony.

The other development in the history of New

England, which underlay the Newark removal, was that strange episode in the story of our churches known as the "Half Way Covenant." According to the theory of church membership held by the Church of England, everybody, born of Christian parents, was a member of the church. The New England churches held to a different theory. It was their contention that only such persons as had had a vital religious experience of their own or, as we might say, had been converted, were properly eligible to church membership, and that even these persons were not members in any actual sense unless they had united with the church by a public profession of their faith. Now, thus far, their position is very clear, and involves no difficulty. But, along with this theory of church membership, our fathers also cherished a belief in Infant Baptism. They taught that any child, either of whose parents was a member of the church, was eligible for the sacrament of Baptism, and by that rite became, in a sense, a member of the church; tho the membership was not really regarded as complete until the child had reached maturity and had made a public profession of his faith. Now certain of these children, whose parents were church members but who had never themselves made a profession of faith, came in due season to have children of their own, and presented these for Baptism. The Church was now confronted with a grave problem. The parents of these children were, in a sense, members of the church, for they had been baptized. But,

in another sense, they were not full church members for they had not publicly professed their faith, or become regenerate, or laid claim to any vital Christian experience of their own. Accordingly they had never partaken of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and so were not in full communion with the church. The problem was, then, as to whether these parents, who had a partial but not full church membership, had the right to expect that the church should baptize their children.

After considerable debate and heated controversy, the New England churches arrived at that strange answer which is known to historians as "The Half-Way Covenant." The answer contained in that covenant was substantially as follows: That since, according to the creed of their stern Calvinism, all children who were not baptized were doomed to eternal punishment, and since, in a sense at least, these parents were partial members of the church, therefore the churches would recognize a "half-way" membership, and would admit the children of such as had been themselves baptized, but had never come into full communion, to receive Baptism, but that they should not receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper until they had become regenerate. The result of this concession was that great numbers of the people were contented with this partial membership, that the Lord's Supper was neglected, and that church membership in New England, tho in theory confined to the regenerate,



was actually, of this loose, "half-way" sort, almost as universal as in the Church of England.

It is easy to understand that this innovation, which was then beginning to become prevalent in New Haven, was an extremely repugnant one to Abraham Pierson. In its own way, it let down the bars to participation in state affairs quite as effectually as the lax laws of the Connecticut Colony. It made church membership easy and devoid of serious meaning. Pierson foresaw from it only dire calamity. When taken in connection with the impending union of the two colonies it left, to his mind, only one possible course open, namely that he should go again into the wilderness and begin a new settlement, whose laws should be the law of God.

Agents were sent to examine and buy lands in New Jersey, on the Passaic River. In October 1666, they returned and, on the thirtieth day of that month, a large meeting was held at Branford and the following agreement was made:

"Deut. 1:13; Ex. 18:21; Deut. 17:15; Jer. 36:21.  
1. That none shall be admitted free men or free burgesses, within our town upon Passaic river, in the province of New Jersey, but such planters as are members of some or other of the Congregational churches; nor shall any but such be chosen to magistracy, or to carry on civil judicature, or as deputies or assistants to have power to vote in establishing laws, and making or repealing them, or to any chief military trust or office, nor shall any but such church members have any vote in such elections: though all others admitted to be planters have

right to their proper inheritances and do and shall enjoy all other civil liberties and privileges according to all laws, orders, grants, which are, or shall hereafter be, made for this town. 2. We shall, with care and diligence, provide for maintenance of the purity of religion as professed in Congregational churches. Where unto subscribed the inhabitants from Branford:

Jasper Crane, Abra. Pierson, Samuel Swaine, Lawrence Ward, Thomas Blatchley, Samuel Plum, Josiah Ward, Samuel Rose, Thomas Pierson, John Ward, John Catlin,<sup>v</sup> Richard Harrison, Ebenezer Canfield, John Ward, Sen., Ed. Ball, John Harrison, John Crane, Thomas Huntington, Delivered Crane, Aaron Blatchley, Richard Lawrence, John Johnson, Thomas Lyon (his mark)."

Mr. Pierson, and a few of the leaders, left Branford for Newark in the spring of 1667, and were followed, in June, by the remainder of the party. They went by way of Long Island Sound. Tradition says that the first to land on the Newark shore was Elizabeth Swaine, nineteen years of age, being helped ashore by her lover Josiah Ward. Each Newark settler was given six acres for his new home. Mr. Pierson was granted eighty pounds a year, to continue as pastor, and served until his death, eleven years later. During the last years of his life his son Abraham, later the first rector of Yale, assisted him in the pastorate.

Abraham Pierson died August 9th, 1678. He left an estate valued at eight hundred twenty-two pounds, including a library of four hundred forty volumes, valued at one hundred pounds. His wife was Abigail Wheelright the daughter of Rev. John Wheelright of Lincolnshire, England, who came to

America and settled in Exeter, New Hampshire. They had eleven children: Abraham, born at Lynn; Thomas, John, Abigail and Grace, born at Southampton; and Edward, Susanna, Rebecca, Theophilus, Isaac and Mary, born at Branford.

Mr. Pierson was a man of note in early New England, and appears to have made many friends in high places, and to have achieved an enviable reputation. Governor Hutchinson, a personal friend, declared him to be, "A man of high character and commanding influence—a godly and learned man"; while Cotton Mather goes even further, in this eulogy: "It is reported by Pliny, and perhaps 'tis but a Plinyism, that there is a fish called Lucerna, whose tongue doth shine like a torch, if it be but a fable, yet let the tongue of a minister be the moral of that fable; now such an illuminating tongue, was that of our Pierson. Wherever he came, he shone. He left behind him the character of a pious and prudent man; and a true child of Abraham, now safely lodged in Sinu-Abraha."

It was his unusual fortune to have had a large influence in the formation of four new settlements, and upon each of them he left the strong impress of his remarkable personality. Conscientious to an extreme, strict and conservative in theology, zealously guarding the church and its prerogatives from stain of worldliness, he was a Puritan of the Puritans; forsaking his home, and journeying thru the wilderness, a Pilgrim of conscience, not once but four times, he oft forsook the habitations of his

neighbors in search "for a better city, whose builder and maker is God." These qualities cause him to stand out preëminent in the history of the Branford Church, the typical representative of those stern but virile virtues of the early fathers. When we add to these his burning apostolic zeal, he becomes at once one of the outstanding men of his time. We may close this review of his ministry by quoting three stanzas of a poem which he wrote himself. In their outward form they are scarcely beautiful, and belong very evidently to those days of execrable verse whose products were such as are found in "The Bay Psalm Book," which was used in church service by the fathers. Yet this very quality may but add to their aptness as a eulogy. The poem was a long one, of thirty-two stanzas, and was written after the death of his friend Governor Eaton, but its words may very fittingly be used of the author himself.

"To each true Church he was a loving friend,  
The care thereof he did to Christ commend.  
I' th' civill state he was our hordd of gold,  
He wisely did our lawes and orders mold.

\* \* \* \* \*

"God's angels attended his blessed soule,  
Convoy'd him to glorie, wherein the soule  
Of God's elect, his precious name was found;  
There he God's great Prayses shall ever sound.

\* \* \* \* \*

"But sith thou'rt gon to rest, and heav'nly joy,  
And canst here no futher be our convoy,  
We leave thee on the throne at Christ's right hand,  
Beggng a like man in thy place to stand."

## JOHN BOWERS AND THE YEARS OF FAMINE

It was probably at some time during Mr. Pierson's ministry that the name of the settlement was changed from Totokett to Branford. No record of the exact date of that change exists. The name *Branford* appears to have been taken from *Brentford*, a town seven miles west of London, in Middlesex County, England. Brentford is famous in history as being the site of a bloody conflict which occurred, in 1016, between Edward Ironsides and the Danes. Six Protestants were burned there during the reign of Queen Mary. The noted battle ground of Hounsley Heath lies near at hand. Tradition states that several of the early settlers came originally from this town.

Doctor Trumbull, the Connecticut historian, has been responsible for the widespread acceptance of two probably erroneous theories concerning the Branford of this time. He states, firstly, that Mr. Pierson carried with him, to Newark, the church records and that they are lost. We have already affirmed that this is probably untrue. He also states that almost all of the inhabitants went to Newark with Pierson and that the town was nearly devoid of population for about twenty-five years. This also seems not to be in accordance with the real facts. It would rather appear that not much more than half of the settlers joined the New Jer-

sey party. The number of signatures to the agreement, made at the time of the removal, which is quoted above, is but twenty-three. To a "Plantation Covenant," which will be quoted shortly, and which was drawn up by the settlers who remained at Branford, there are forty-seven signatures; while a purely routine matter, which came up in town meeting only two years after the removal, a meeting at which there is little probability that more than a portion of the free-men were present, a vote of twenty is recorded. Doctor Trumbull is also responsible for the tradition that the town was without church services during most of the time which elapsed between the removal of Mr. Pierson and the arrival of the Rev. Samuel Russell. The true situation would seem to be that the town was probably at no time without religious services, and that the only reason for their lacking a minister, after the removal of Mr. Bowers, was their inability to persuade anyone to accept their call.

On June 10, 1667, John Wilford, Thomas Blatchley, John Collins and Michael Taintor were ordered to buy Richard Harrison's place as a house for a minister. At the same meeting the following covenant was drawn up and signed:

"For as much as that it appears that the undertaking and the settlement of this place of Branford, was procured by and for men of Congregational principles, as to church order according to the platform of discipline agreed on by the synod in '48, or thereabouts, drawn from the word of God in the main; we, that yet remain here, can say that we have found much peace and quietness, to

our great comfort, for the which we desire to bless God; and that it may so remain to such as do continue their abode in this place, and to such as shall come in to fill up the room of those that are removed, and that do intend to remove from this place of Branford—we all do see cause now for to agree that an orthodox minister of that judgement shall be called to it and among us. The gathering of such a church shall be encouraged. The upholdment of such church officers shall not want our proportional supply of maintainence, according to rule. We will not in any way encroach upon or disturb their liberties in so walking from time to time, and at all times; nor will we be in any ways injurious to them in civil or ecclesiastical respects and this we freely and voluntarily subscribe ourselves unto jointly and severally so long as we remain inhabitants of this place, and this we bind ourselves unto by our subscription to this agreement. It is also agreed that whoever shall come for purchase or be admitted here, shall so subscribe before admittance or his bargain be valid in law among us.” Signed, Jasper Crane, Johnathan Rose, John Wilford, Thomas Blatchley, Samuel Plum, Michael Taintor, John Collins, Michael Palmer, John Ward, John Linslie, George Page, Thomas Gutsill, Samuel Swaine, Samuel Pond, Isaac Bradley, William Rosewell, Peter Tyler, John Adams, Moses Batchley, John Frisbie, William Maltbie, Thomas Sargent, John Linsley Jr., John Taintor, George Adams, John Whitehead, Samuel Ward, Edward Frisbie, Henry Gretwich, Matthew Bikskett, Thomas Harrison, Thomas Weeden, John Robbins, Robert Foote, Bartholomew Goodrich, Sigismond Richalls, George Seward, Edward Ball, William Hoadley, Eleazer Stent, John Rogers, Samuel Bradfield, John Charles, Edward Barker, Anthony Howd, Daniel Swaine, John Rose, Frances Linsley. Six of these later removed to Newark.

When Abraham Pierson went to Newark he engaged the Rev. John Bowers to serve for the

remainder of his uncompleted year of office. Mr. Bowers began work December 9, 1666, and continued to minister to the community until February, 1678. He was the son of George Bowers, of the Plymouth Colony, where his family located before 1637. After graduating from Harvard, in 1649, ranking in social position, then much considered, the lowest in a class of five, he returned to Plymouth and taught school there for a time. From 1653 until 1660, he taught school in New Hampshire. At one time he had as many as eighteen pupils, tho often only seven or eight were present. He remained there seven years and then went to Guilford, Connecticut, where he served in a dual capacity, teaching school during the week and preaching on the Sabbath. He continued in this work four or five years, and then came to Branford.

At a town meeting, held February 9, 1667, it was ordered that the rate levied for the raising of his salary should be assessed not only upon the residents of Branford, but also against those who had removed to Newark, but still owned estate in the former town, the reason being "because that Mr. Pierson put in Mr. Bowers for serving out his year." On February 23, 1669, "the inhabitants of the town of Branford agree and conclude, with the consent of Mr. Bowers, to allow him forty pounds and a days work of every planter in the town, to help him as he shall have need to employ them. The forty pounds and the day's work is for the



consideration that Mr. Bowers, with God's leave doth promise to carry on the work of the ministry here in Branford the ensuing year; and the time begining the 10th dec., 1669." The year following it was voted that he should have forty pounds, and the town house and use of the lands, if he would engage settlement and live in the town house. May 30, 1671, by vote of fourteen, out of twenty, it was decided to give him a "call." The town house, or parsonage, would seem to have fallen into bad condition, for it was also voted that "as for the town repairing damage, all that is granted is the mending of the chimney and walls and getting the windows glazed." Bowers did not reply to this call until the third day of the same year, when he made answer, "the town having made a motion of settlement unto me, my answer is, that God, by his providence leading and guiding so to it, and the town providing for my comfortable subsistence, according to your ability, I am willing for to sit down with you." Some difficulty seems to have arisen, however, for, in the middle of the following February, Mr. Bowers requested the town to find another minister, and it was voted to comply with his request but to urge him not to leave until they could find some one else. Matters seem to have straightened themselves out, for he remained six years longer, until 1678, when he removed to Derby. After some years of service there, he settled at Rye, New York, where he died June 14, 1687.

John Bowers was a man of far smaller calibre

than either of his predecessors. He was by no means an eloquent preacher and was not especially popular, but he was earnest and persevering. His personal life seems to have been beyond reproach and, altho his talents were of a mediocre sort, he served the church well during this transition period. He married Bridget Thompson, a New Haven girl, who survived him several years. They had six children, one of whom, Nathaniel, followed in his father's footsteps and became a minister. There is some question as to whether it was Nathaniel, or his father, who served the church at Rye.

The next decade in the history of Branford Church has for its only distinction the fact that it was a ten years period of candidating. Again and again the town endeavored to secure a minister but without success. Sometimes they repeated their call, to the man upon whom they had fixed their choice, six or seven times before finally being induced to take "no" for an answer. The town was a small one, and does not seem to have offered much inducement to the ministers of that day. They were supplied by a Mr. Stowe, Daniel Russell, John Harriman, John Wise, Jonah Fordham, a Mr. Oakes, a Mr. Younglove, Mr. Woodruff, Mr. Emerson, and others. Once they seemed almost at the point of success. Mr. Samuel Mather preached for them a number of times, was very favorably received, and was finally induced to locate in the town. How long he remained we do not know, but the town records state that it was voted

to build him a barn, so he must have stayed some little time; it may even have been as long as four years. But, just as their difficulties seem happily settled the General Court intervened and ordered Mr. Mather to become minister of the church at Windsor. The Branford people remonstrated, but without avail. In despair they turned to the neighboring ministers for help and advice, and also set apart a day in December of 1681 as a "Day of Humiliation and Prayer in their deplorable state not having a minister." During these years of candidating the minister's house, which had reverted to the town at the removal of Mr. Bowers, was rented "at on outcry by a piece of candle." This was an old New England method of dealing with such matters. A short piece of candle was lighted, and the auctioneer "cried up" the property and received bids, until such time as the candle burned out, when the highest bid obtained the property.

Despite their ill success in obtaining the services of a minister, the church appears to have grown and to have increasingly prospered. At the time when Samuel Mather was considering their call, and his friends were remonstrating against his accepting it, because of the smallness of the place, he assured them that it was a very considerable one. About this same time the Meeting House appears to have become too small for their increasing membership. They talked of building a new one or of enlarging the old, and December 11, 1679, they voted that "ye meeting house shall be enlarged, viz

to have an addition to it so as to make it as great again as now it is." They also increased the salary which they offered from forty to sixty pounds, and they petitioned the legislature for permission to "embody in a church estate," but their petition was refused. Finally their persistence was rewarded and, early in 1686, they prevailed upon the Rev. Samuel Russell to become their minister.

## IN THE DAYS OF SAMUEL RUSSELL

In the early years of the Cambridge settlement a young man, named John Russell, located there and became one of the first students at Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1645. The young man then became pastor of the church at Wethersfield, from which church had gone forth, a few years previously, the band of Pilgrims which settled Totokett. He remained at Wethersfield until 1659, when he and all but six of his church removed to Hadley in western Massachusetts. It was in this historic town that his son, Samuel, the future pastor of the Branford church, was born.

It seems to have been quite the regular thing for Russell parsonages to have been linked with interesting episodes in history. Every one knows the part which the Branford parsonage had in the founding of Yale College; it may not be so generally known that it was in the Russell house in Hadley that the regicides Goffe and Whalley were concealed for several years, while Samuel Russell was a young lad, or that Whalley died in that house (about 1676-8) and was entombed in the stone wall of the cellar. It was from the friendly concealment of John Russell's home that Whalley and Goffe, patriarchal in their flowing beards of white, are said to have emerged, that Sabbath morning when the town was threatened with massacre, and to have led the surprised settlers to a victorious

repulse of the Redskin hordes ; and it was into that same kindly shelter that they afterwards returned, never to be seen again, by the people of the town. Dramatic indeed, to us, is this legend of old New England, but young Russell must have known these aged refugees very well.

After graduating, in 1681, from Harvard, the college of his father, Samuel Russell returned, for a time, to the home of his youth and taught the village school in Hadley; doubtless spending his spare hours in the study of theology, under his father's tutelage. But not all of these spare hours were devoted to Hebrew and to Metaphysics, for it was during these years that he met and courted Mistress Abigail Whiting, whose father was, also, a minister. He married her in the year 1685.

It was in February of the year following that Mr. Russell made his first appearance in Branford. He found favor in the sight of his hearers, and they extended to him a call to become their pastor, offering him sixty pounds salary (in provisions), the use of the town house and lands, and his firewood. They would seem to have extended the call more than once, for we find it recorded (June 7, 1687) that "Whereas motion hath been made to Mr. Samuel Russell respecting his settlement or taking office in a church way, and having also applied and solicited to the General Court of liberty to embody, and being granted as also it being moved to Mr. Russell by those that are members of churches, the town agreed to renew their motion

and desire, leaving it to a committee to prosecute the work as they and Mr. Russell shall agree."

So often had the men of Branford extended a call to young ministers, during those ten years of pastoral famine, and so frequently had their calls been declined, that it must have been an overwhelming surprise to them when (September 12, 1687) Mr. Russell *accepted* their invitation, and became their pastor. And fortunate did that acceptance prove to be, both for church and minister.

Altho the call was not accepted, and probably not extended, until 1687, it is likely that Mr. Russell was preaching in Branford during much of the year 1686. Churches and ministers habitually lived together a probationary year or so, in those days, before permitting themselves to be united in the irrevocable matrimony of people and pastor. Possibly this may partially explain the unusual length of those ancient pastorates, and the exceeding scarcity of cases of ecclesiastical divorce. At any rate Russell was a resident of the town, for (Oct. 4, 1686) the town made provision for supplying him with firewood, ordering "that every male person from 16 yrs. old and upwards fit for labor shall go forth to cut wood one day, and every team shall go forth one day to cart." This practice of granting to the minister one or more day's work from every able-bodied man in the township was a common one in those years. The older New England ministers did not attempt, nor were they expected, to live on their meagre salaries. Most

of them had the use of considerable land, and they raised crops and kept animals, in the same manner as did their neighbors. Consequently this practice of granting them a day's work from each of their neighbors was a very necessary and serviceable one. Their salaries were supplemented also by many gifts of groceries and of farm products. Accordingly a salary of sixty pounds, such as was given to Mr. Russell, was more than sufficient to provide a comfortable living.

The outstanding event of the early years of Samuel Russell's pastorate was the reorganization of the Branford Church. As we have noted above, the settlers had unanimously petitioned the General Court for permission to "to embody" in an organized church. This was in 1681. The request was refused. But in October, 1687, the petition was renewed and the necessary permission finally obtained. In the following spring twenty-six people drew up and signed the following covenant:

"It having pleased God of his grace to call us up to ye visible profession of religion, and being now by his providence called to unite together, for ye carrying on ye ordinances of God amongst us. We do therefore with selfabasement and sense of our great unworthiness, yet in obedience to ye gospel of our Lord Jesus,—We do this day before God and his people give ourselves and ours unto God and then one to another to walk together in attendance to all the duties and enjoyment of all the privileges of the covenant of grace, that are to be attended and enjoyed in particular visible ch'hs,—making the scripture to be our rule. We do declare it to be our purpose (as God shall assist,) both in our principles and practice



in all substantials, to walk in consonance with ye ch'hs of Christ with whom we hold communion."

The following twenty-six men and women subscribed their names at this time; Samuel Russell, Wm. Maltby, Eleazer Stent, Samuel Pond, Jno. Frisby, Jno Taintor, Peter Tyler, Danl. Swain, Aaron Blatchly, Thos. Sarjeant, Samll Betts, Eliz. Barker, Hannah Maltby, Sarai Blatchly, Miriam Pond, Dorcas Tainter, Eliz. Stent, Hannah Wheadon, Eliz. Pamer, Hannah Frisby, Deliver<sup>d</sup> Rose, Mary Betts, Ruth Frisby, Sarai Page, Sarai Gutsill, Jane Tyler.

This meeting took place March 7, 1688. During the month of April seven additional names were subscribed, while thirty-four more were added during the following year.

Each year of the last two decades of the seventeenth century brought to Branford an increase in prosperity. There were frequent additions to the population, and some of the newcomers were tradesmen. A William Bartholomew built a corn mill in the settlement, and his son Isaac appears to have been Branford's first settled physician. There was also a George Baldwin, who was a blacksmith, and a John Collins whose trade was that of a "cordwainer," or, as we should now say, a shoemaker. In 1697, we are told that Samuel Russell and a few others erected a saw mill. In January of 1685, a committee was chosen to secure a patent for the town and one was granted, February 16, 1685. This charter is still in existence and is in the custody of the town clerk. The same year it was decided to have a town school for the purpose

of instructing the children in the arts of reading and writing.

Because of this increased prosperity it became evident that the old Meeting House, even in its enlarged form, was too small for the growing congregation. Accordingly, on the twenty-eighth of September, 1699, it was unanimously voted to build a new Meeting House. But, altho everyone recognized the necessity for a new building, opinion was strongly and almost evenly divided as to the form of the new house. Some were in favor of erecting a square house, while others favored a long, rectangular one. In their desire to settle this difficulty they had recourse to the usages of the Old Testament and, November thirtieth, 1699, it is recorded that "whereas it hath been agreed upon by the town to build a new meeting-house, and there being different notions respecting the form, some being for a square house and others for a long brick house with leanto; it is agreed by the town that a lott shall be drawn to decide the matter, and it is agreed that Benj. Harrington shall draw the lott." When the lot was drawn it decided the matter in favor of the square house.

Possibly the decision to build at this particular time may have been due to a certain legacy then received by the town.

The will of John Taintor (August 15, 1699) contained the following clause: "I do give to ye town of Brandford that part of my homelott lying between Steven Foots Homelott and what was

formerly my father Swains and so this to ye street on ye north side of sd Land and which I do give to sd Towne to build a publick meeting house upon, and to continue for that use so long as they shall maintain a meeting house there unles ye town See cause to build elsewhere and then that land to by to ye common or what other use ye town see meet." He also bequeathed "to ye Church of Christ in Brandford five pounds to be paid out of my moveable estate to be disposed of for ye use of ye Church as Mr. Russell and Eleaz-r Stent shall see meet." The land bestowed in the above legacy is the present Green, and on it the new Meeting House was erected, in accordance with the wish of the donor. Previously to this the church had received at least one other legacy, that of Robert Rose who, dying April 4th, 1665, left his church the sum of six pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence.

The Green of those days differed somewhat from its present appearance, being much more rugged and broken in configuration. Steep little hillocks and hollows were everywhere visible, and huge boulders were scattered here and there upon its surface. One of these, rivaling a house in size, was situated nearly in front of the present church edifice. The main street of the town was on the southern side of the common and the new meeting house faced the south-west. The stocks and pillory and whipping-post were transferred, at this time, to a hillock located on the spot where now stands

the Baptist Church, which hillock became known, in consequence, as "Whipping-post Hill." The village smithy was situated near another hillock, a sandy one, which appears to have occupied a position in the rear of the present Trinity Church, tho well over towards Montowese Street. This hillock was known as Baldwin's Hill; George Baldwin being the smith and also one of the first deacons of our church.

Once the decision as to its form had been arrived at, by sacred "lott," work upon the new house of worship began in earnest. There were no contractors in those days and the townsfolk were dependent on their own labor and skill in the rearing of the new edifice. Accordingly it was ordered that every inhabitant of the town should bear his share in the common task and to each was assigned some part in the actual building operations, according to the nature of his skill and strength. It was further provided that those who came to work late should be fined for their laziness. Evidently there were slackers even in that day.

Quite pretentious must the lines of the new Meeting House have appeared to the men and women who had worshipped for so many years in the building of logs. "Forty foot square—and upright wall from the ground to the plate" were the specifications agreed upon; and a point just in front of the present town hall was the site chosen. The work pushed steadily forward and we read,

"June 27, 1701. It is agreed that the congregation in Branford do meet together to worship in the old meeting-house next Lord's day, and that the next following we meet in the new house." So upon the second Sunday of July the drum was beaten from the tower crowning the pyramidal roof—the call to worship—and the inhabitants proudly gathered in their new house and raised within its walls, for the first time, their psalms to God.

Within a few years' time the new building proved too small for the growing congregation and, January 8, 1706, it was voted "that there should be one gallery built on the front of the meetinghouse this next summer." But before the summer months arrived even this added seating space seemed not enough and so the town took further action, providing that "Where as at a town meeting January 1706 it was agreed there should be one gallery in the meeting house but upon futher consideration it is thought to be more convenient to have three galleries, It is therefore now ordered that there shall be three galleries." A three penny rate was laid upon all the eatable effects of the townsfolk, for defraying the expense of building the galleries.

It may be worth while for us to endeavor to picture to ourselves the appearance of this new building. Although no detailed description of it has come down to us, nor are there any prints, yet certain allusions in the records, coupled with our knowledge of the general appearance of the meet-

ing houses of that period, will enable us to possess a probably accurate idea as to how this new house of worship looked. In outward appearance it was perfectly square, with a pyramidal roof, crowned at its apex with a simple turret. It is probable that on each of three sides of the house there was a door, while the fourth side was occupied by the pulpit. There were numerous windows, with small panes of glass, which was held in place by nails instead of with putty. The building was unpainted both inside and out. Like all of the old New England houses, the one in Branford was provided, at first, with long, rude benches for seats. But soon after its completion, permission was granted to the minister and Governor Saltonstall, and later to others, to build pews. These pews were square, box-like affairs, and were located along the walls, the minister's being situated at the right of the pulpit and the others ranging toward the rear according to the rank and wealth of their owners. Each pew was the private property of the man who built it and was fashioned according to his own desire, so that there must have been a noticeable lack of unity in the appearance of the auditorium. The pulpit was a high one, reached by a long flight of stairs, so that the minister was on a level with the galleries. It was probably surmounted by a huge, wooden sounding board. Just below the pulpit, and facing the congregation, were two long raised seats which were set apart for the deacons of the church. We find many an entry, in the

records, of Mr. So-and-So being elected to serve as deacon, and that he "accepted the office and took his place on the Deacon's Seat." The office of deacon was more onerous then than now, for it fell to their lot to "line the Psalms," that is to read one line of the Psalm, which line was then sung by the congregation, then the next line, which was sung in its turn, and so on), and also, in the absence of the pastor, to expound the Scriptures and to read the sermon which he sent. There being no musical instruments in the churches of that day, it was also the duty of the deacon to choose the tune and to "pitch" the Psalm—that is to decide the pitch at which it should be sung. The Deacon's Seats, in the Branford Meeting House, were distinguished from the others not only by their position but by being furnished with "banisters."

Under date of January 14th, 1725, in the records of the Ecclesiastical Society, comes the first reference to another interesting custom. "Capt. Nath-l Harrison, Mr. Edward Barker, Capt. S. Maltbie, Capt. Ele-z Stent, & Jno. Russell, were appointed a Com<sup>ttee</sup> for to seat ye meeting house any three of them to act there in. Ye meeting was adjourned to ye second Monday in Feb-ry next Sun hour high at night at this place, and ye Seaters then to make return of their doings." The duty of this committee was to assign to every inhabitant of the town a suitable seat in the Meeting House. In determining where each person should sit the committee was expected to grade the entire population,

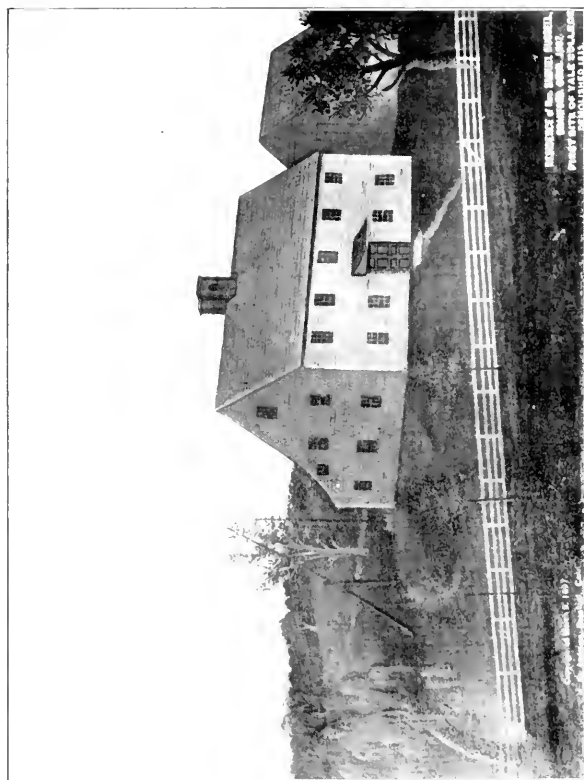
deciding the order of precedence by office, wealth, social position and such matters. At no state function of modern times are lines more finely or more firmly drawn than they were in the supposedly democratic congregations of New England. The best seats were considered to be those immediately in front of the pulpit, then those in the front balcony, while the least desirable were the seats in the rear. This order of preference would suggest to us musical comedy rather than a modern church, and one wishes greatly that, in this respect at least, we might return to the ways of the fathers.

Often the work of the committee did not receive unanimous approbation. Probably no one ever complained because he was assigned "a foremost seat in the synagogue," but complaints were not uncommon from those who were convinced that the committee had not set a sufficiently high value upon their worth to the community. In this respect human nature seems not much to have been changed. The work of this first Branford Committee was not accomplished without criticism, for, at the meeting in February, "there being sundry persons dissatisfied with ye report of ye Seaters, read at last meeting, it was voted whether any alteration should be made there in." Unfortunately the record does not state whether the rulings of the committee were sustained or not.

It was probably about the year 1690 that Samuel Russell erected the famous "Russell Parsonage," on the lot just south of the old graveyard. It was







### RUSSELL PARSONAGE

Residence of Samuel Russell, erected 1690  
*(Used by permission of John A. Andrews)*

a pretentious house in its day and lasted for more than one hundred and fifty years. Shortly before its demolition the Russell family, in whose hands it had continuously remained, had a pencil sketch made of it; and it is from this sketch that the many pictures of it now in existence, including the excellent one which hangs in the present church, were made. In this house were born most of Samuel Russell's children and, in the south-west front room, was held the historic gathering from which grew Yale College.

From the day of the colony's inception Yale had been planned for by the New Haven people, for one of the three-fold purposes of Davenport, the founder of the colony, had been the establishment of a college. The pressing necessities of subduing the wilderness had postponed the matter for a time, and the reluctance of Harvard to the founding of a rival school, and the political crisis due to the union of New Haven and Hartford, had further delayed the fruition of the purpose. But at length it came to pass. A number of the younger ministers became much interested in the establishment of such a school, and among these Samuel Russell with the Rev. James Pierpont of New Haven and Rev. Samuel Andrews of Milford were most active. By their efforts ten of the most prominent ministers of the Colony consented to serve as trustees for the new institution. They met, sometime in the year 1701, in the Russell Parsonage, to consult together and to formulate plans. The tradition is,

and it seems authentic, that each of them brought to this gathering a gift of books and, laying them upon the table, pronounced the well known words "I give these books for the founding of a college in this Colony." The table upon which these books are said to have been laid is now in the possession of Yale University and, at the time of the Bi-Centennial Celebration of the founding of the College, a stone was placed upon the Branford Green, commemorating this early gathering. Mr. Russell was appointed custodian of the little library, which consisted of some forty-odd folios, and it was kept for some years in his house. There is an old story to the effect that one of these books suffered a curious mishap while in his care. It is said that the book was lying one day upon the table, and that the sunlight, passing thru one of the small window panes, which was thicker in the center than on the edges and so acted much like a burning-glass, became focused upon the opened page and burned a hole in it. The further history of Yale is too well known to warrant repetition. One more fact is, however, worthy of note as being a part of the history of Branford Church. After a charter for the new "Collegiate School" had been obtained, Abraham Pierson, son of Branford's first settled minister, was chosen for the first rector, or president of the new college. Pierson was then minister at Killingworth. Later, after the removal to New Haven, Samuel Russell and Governor Saltonstall bore a large part of the expense of the erection of the first building upon the present campus.

It was during this pastorate that much of the lands at Indian Neck and in other portions of the town came into the possession of the Society. As early as August 9, 1675, the town had purchased, from John Potter, a New Haven blacksmith, two and one half acres of land at the Neck. March 15, 1686, there was purchased by the "Inhabitants and Proprietors of Branford from Wampum ye present Sachem, and Nawallokis (alias Richard), Libbon Johnson, Geoffery & Mannopolot (alias Young Rich-rd) Indians . . . in consideration of ten pounds" more land at Indian Neck "reserving a parcel of upland lying at ye neck called Indian Neck and on ye west end of ye neck adjourning to that land ye English last purchased of us Indians above mentioned, only ye English are to have a highway to cart their hay from their meadow." Other purchases were made in 1703 and 1716, and finally the entire Neck came into the possession of the Society. That portion known as the "Town Half Acres" came gradually into the same hands, by a series of purchases made during a period of more than a century; the first purchase being in 1685, when about thirty acres were obtained, for a consideration of thirty-two pounds and an Indian coat. The Society also acquired about one hundred acres at Scotch Cap; as well as the Town Meadow, of about eight acres. At first this land was not much used. Hay was gathered from the cleared ground, some was used for pasturing, and some was given the ministers to use as they would. It was also their prerogative, until after the close

of Father Gillett's pastorate, to cut their firewood from the lands at Indian Neck, a committee being annually appointed to mark such trees as should be cut. From the time of Mr. Robbins' ministry the larger part of the lands were leased out by the Society.

During the first thirty years of Samuel Russell's pastorate he was the only minister in the township. But early in the eighteenth century the northern portion of the town began to be somewhat thickly settled and a separate community centered about Libbie's Hill, which is a little north of the present North Branford Village. The hill was named from an Indian Sachem who once lived there.

The people of this neighborhood, who were known as the North Farmers, requested permission of the town, in 1715, to have separate preaching for themselves. They felt that the distance to the Branford Church was too great and that their own community was large enough to support such services; but the Branford Church was, naturally, reluctant to vote away a portion of its congregation, and so the petition was not granted. The North Farmers were insistent however, and, in 1717, appealed to the General Court. Because of this appeal the town voted, in the autumn of that same year, to allow the people of Libbie's Hill to have a minister of their own for four months of each year.

The first services were held at the home of Daniel Page who lived near the summit of the hill. Each year following, the North Farmers kept their own

minister a longer time than in the year preceding and September 27, 1722, they petitioned for a permanent minister. The town had by this time perceived the wisdom of the separation and it was voted to "set up another Society, purchase a farm for the minister, and build a Meeting House." A two hundred acre lot on the east side of Great Hill was selected by the old Society for the parsonage lands. To offset what they had done for the daughter society they also purchased an equal amount of land for themselves. There was considerable dissatisfaction among the North Farmers about the boundary line which the old Society had fixed between the two parishes. Several times they requested a revision of the line, and finally, December 30th, 1723, the town voted "that if the sd north farmers would set down contented with their former bounds that then the Town would go equal share with them in building & perfecting a meeting house, within those bounds, of forty foot in length and thirty foot in breadth." This proposition was accepted, and by 1725, the new Meeting House was well under way. Mr. Russell was present at the erection of the frame and made the prayer. The building was located within a few feet of the present one. It was a typical meeting house of its time. It had doors on the east, west, and south sides, had many windows with small, diamond-shaped panes. The floor of the audience room was a few inches lower than the door-sills, so that it was not uncommon for a person who

entered hurriedly to stumble and to pitch headlong upon his face. Doubtless this furnished considerable amusement to the younger members of the congregation, but it must have been a trifle awkward to the principal concerned, and have interfered sadly with the progress of divine worship, especially if late comers were as frequent then as now. Another interruption to the service was found in the high sounding box, a square roof-like structure above the pulpit, which served as a rendezvous for a small army of bats, which was wont to come forth frequently and at inauspicious times and go flitting about over the heads of the people. The church had boxed pews, and high, shut-in galleries on three sides.

The Rev. Jonathan Merrick, a native of Springfield, became the first pastor of the North Branford Church. He was ordained there, in 1726, and remained until his death, in 1772, tho unable, because of paralysis, to perform the active duties of his office after the year 1769. His last public service was to arrange the details for the ordination of his successor, Rev. Samuel Eels. Mr. Merrick was an unusually large framed man, of commanding appearance. He lived to hold a position of much influence in church and state, and served as one of the first members of the Yale Corporation. Many interesting stories are related of him, among them the following: Mr. Timothy Stone, himself a minister, taught school awhile in the North Branford parish. He had some trouble with the



disciplining of his pupils—but we will let him relate the affair in his own words. “I had a refractory boy in my school whom I punished. His father was displeased about it and took pains to show his displeasure by keeping the child from school. The worthy minister sent for the father, who dared not neglect the summons. Mr. Merrick then reprimanded him with much severity, saying ‘You teach rebellion in Mr. Stone’s school. It shall not be so; I will have you know that I will put my foot on your neck. This rebellious spirit shall not be tolerated.’ The rebuke was quietly submitted to and had its desired effect.” This story is a good illustration of the power of the minister in colonial times. His word was law, his voice believed to be the voice of God. But times have changed. One can scarcely imagine the horrible catastrophe which would overwhelm the modern pastor who should be bold enough to summon one of his flock into his presence and should then declare his intention of putting the clerical foot on his parishioner’s neck. The yellow journals would run the tale in headlines for a week and the presumptuous minister speedily find himself in the midst of a sensational ecclesiastical trial, if not in worse case. So far has the pendulum swung in two short centuries.

Because of the separation of the northern portion of the town into a separate parish, it became necessary to keep the records of the town business and of the parish business distinct. Accordingly, in 1726, the Old or the South Society chose John

Russell, the sixth child of Samuel Russell, for the Society Clerk. Church business was henceforth transacted in separate meetings and the minutes of those meetings furnish us with a trustworthy and more complete record than hitherto. One of the odd aspects of this separation of church and town is found in the fact that, for many years after other secular matters had been left wholly to the town, the schools remained under the jurisdiction of the Society, and the details of school business occupy a large part of these first Society Records.

The first half of the eighteenth century saw the high tide of Branford's early prosperity, and during that period the town reached a degree of relative importance in the state far greater than it has ever attained since. It seems to be actually true that, in those days, Branford outstripped New Haven in commercial importance. The key to this prosperity lay in a fine fleet of sailing vessels, which made the Branford River their port and engaged in an extensive coast-wise trade, particularly with the settlements in Maine. Wharves were built at many points along the river, as far up as Mill Plain, and the harbor was improved. There were also large store houses at Dutch House Wharf, Page's Point, Landfare's Cove, Hobart's Wharf, and at other points along the stream. Wheat, corn, flax seed, rye, etc., were shipped in large quantities to Maine and lumber and fish brought back. A particularly lucrative article of trade was the bay berries, which were in demand

for the making of wax, blacking and salves. So extensive was the commerce in these berries that the town found it necessary to regulate carefully the gathering of them, and a fine of ten shillings was provided as a penalty for picking them on any public land or highway before September fifteenth. Juniper berries also were extensively gathered in later years. The soil in the northern portions of the town produced excellent crops, and the Branford land was as fine for fruits then as now, and dried apples were exported in large quantities. The names of the church members of this time reflect the nautical occupation of the inhabitants, and "Captains" were as common as in Nantucket or on Cape Cod.

The prosperity which came to the town was shared in by the minister, who became one of the largest land owners in Branford. His name appears often on the town records as being one of the parties to some transaction in real estate. Besides the three hundred acres which were given him at his settlement, he received from the town several hundred acres more during his residence. Nor was his success wholly in matters of property. His own church flourished under his leadership, and his influence in the affairs of the colony grew constantly wider and more weighty. One of those ironies of fate, such as one meets frequently in history, grew out of his prominence in ecclesiastical circles. In September 1708, Samuel Russell was a member of the Synod of churches, which sat

at Saybrook, and one of the chief advocates of the historic Saybrook Platform there adopted; a platform which was to cause severe tribulation for his Branford church, in years to come, and was to result in years of ecclesiastical outlawry for his successor in the pastorate. The main feature of this Platform was the institution of "Consociations" in Connecticut, which were to displace the "Associations" in which Congregational churches habitually gathered. The "Consociation" was a semi-Presbyterian body. Whereas the "Associations" were merely neighborly meetings of the churches of a vicinage, for friendly interchange of ideas and for fellowship, and possessed no legislative or judicial powers over the constituent churches, but only an advisory relation; the "Consociation" was intended to have real authority over the individual churches of which it was formed, and to actually adjudicate, in all cases of discipline of a difficult nature. Moreover it did not even need to wait for a church to request its aid, but could take up any question on its own initiative, even against the will of the church concerned. The new organization was intended as a means of strengthening the churches, but was an unpopular one in many parts of the state. Branford church joined in the meetings of the New Haven Consociation but did not formally accept the new plan, and in later years declared that it had never consented to it. But the plan was approved of by the legislature, and so became the law of the land.

Towards the close of the second decade of the century, the health of Mr. Russell began to fail considerably, so that he was often unable to be in his pulpit of a Sunday. The church was considerate towards his infirmity and made repeated provision for assistance in his duties. In April, 1726, it was voted that Deacon Baldwin and others should be a committee "to hire some sutable person to be helpful to Mr. Russell for three months as there may be need." This same year ten pounds was added to his salary. In 1728, Deacon Baldwin is again directed to provide assistance, whenever the pastor is unable to preach; and in September, 1729, it was voted to hire a school teacher, who should also regularly assist Mr. Russell in his work.

But, in spite of these expedients, advanced age and disease interfered more and more often with his labors and the time was soon at hand when both the church and Mr. Russell himself saw clearly that he must lay aside the active pastorate. The matter was settled in the most harmonious manner. A committee was chosen who waited upon Mr. Russell and the matter was informally discussed. Then the following letter was addressed to the Church and Society:

"Branford, June 30, 1730.

"My good neighbors and friends:

I perceive, by your committee that have been with me, that you are desirous of endeavours towards settling another minister that may be pastor to this church while I live, and become your sole pastor when I am gone. I

pray God direct and guide you in that great affair, and, as for me, I shall not at all interrupt your free choice, if it should so happen that your choice should not fall where I should have pitched, was it in my power to choose. And so for my support, the little time I have to live among you, I am not much concerned about it. I only say this about it, that I incline yet to hold the improvement of the 'half acres' at Indian Neck, during my life; and will now relinquish to the Society the meadow in the 'Mill quarter,' and the land and meadow at 'Scotch Cap.' I conclude you will not think it unreasonable to find me firewood while I live. As for yearly salary for my support, you may do just as God may incline your hearts. I leave it wholly with you, depending not on an arm of flesh, but on the Living God for my daily bread, and all other necessities of life; and am not at all afraid but that He who feeds the young ravens when they cry, will provide for my support. I am yours, in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Samuel Russell."

The Society held a meeting and gratefully accepted Mr. Russell's plan, and also voted that he should receive thirty pounds, in bills of credit, by the last day of March of each year. They chose a committee and instructed it to obtain Mr. Samuel Sherman, of New Haven, to supply for them. Mr. Sherman came, and in September they voted, by a small majority, to request him to remain with them. He declined, and the matter remained in dispute among them for some time. The minority were strongly opposed to Mr. Sherman, and Mr. Russell disapproved of him. He was invited several other times, by the same divided vote, but consistently refused to come.

After a pastorate of more than forty-three years, Mr. Russell died, on June 25, 1731, at the age of seventy-one. He left nine children, three of whom became ministers; Samuel being pastor of the church at North Guilford, Daniel of the church at Newport, Rhode Island, and Ebenezer of the Stonington church. The elder daughter, Abigail, married Joseph Morse, who was minister at Derby, and found the lot of a minister's wife so pleasant that, after his death, she married Rev. Samuel Cook. His granddaughter, Mrs. Ezekiel Hayes, is buried in the crypt of Center Church, New Haven, and one of her descendants became president of the United States. Samuel Russell's wife survived him not quite two years, and they both were buried in the Branford Cemetery, where a table monument marks their resting place.

During Mr. Russell's ministry two hundred thirty-seven members were added to the church, of whom ninety-six were males and one hundred forty-one females. He baptized eight hundred seventy persons, eight hundred thirty-three of these being infants. Under his leadership the church grew from being an unorganized group of worshippers, in an obscure settlement, and became one of the strong churches of the state, with a position of relative importance in denominational affairs much greater than it has ever had since.

Lacking somewhat of the eloquence of Sherman or of Pierson, Mr. Russell more than compensated for it by his sagacity and business-like acumen. He

was a statesman, rather than a prophet, in his ministry, and he laid well the foundations of the reorganized church, and reared upon those foundations a building of which no man need be ashamed. His work, and the debt we owe him as a builder, will endure so long as Branford church shall last.



## PHILEMON ROBBINS—"PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE"

Samuel Russell had died in June of 1731. No immediate attempt was made to find a successor to his office. According to the prevalent custom, the pulpit was supplied frequently by the neighboring ministers of the Consociation, and also by Mr. Russell's sons. The filling of the vacant pulpit came about in an accidental way. A Mr. Philemon Robbins, who had graduated from Harvard in 1729, thought it would be great fun to attend the commencement exercises and "to see the Wooden College," at New Haven. While he was there, it so happened that the church in Branford was without a supply for its pulpit. One of the members of the committee went to New Haven to obtain a preacher, chanced to hear Robbins, hunted him up, and invited him to preach in Branford on the following Sunday. He accepted the invitation and his services were so universally approved that, September 18th, he was invited to fill the pulpit for four Sundays, with a view to settlement. He did this, and was called to the pastorate on October 9th, 1732.

It was voted "to give him for settlement 400 £ and to be paid in two year's time, 200 £ ye first year and 200 £ ye next and for sallary 130 £ per annum and his fire wood ye whole time during his continuing a Dissenting minister among us. And the sallary to be paid by ye first of July yearly, and in case ye currency of bills should alter either-

ways from what they are now, then to come to some new and reasonable agreement." Capt. Russell, Capt. Saltonstall, John Linsley, Lieut. Stent, Mr. Isaac Foote, Ensign Harrison and Lieut. Harrison were chosen as a committee to notify Mr. Robbins of the call. The following answer was received from him, and was read at a meeting of the Society, held on December 27, 1732:

"To the Church and people of Christ in Branford: grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied. Brethren and dearly beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, my heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may be happily settled: and whereas it has pleased Almighty God to unite your hearts to me, inasmuch that you have unanimously given me an invitation to settle with you in the great and important work of the Gospel ministry, I have thought deliberately and impartially thereupon; and I know not that I have been wanting to use all proper methods whereby to be determined, viz: in consulting the will of heaven, my own inclinations, as also advising with superior gentlemen of the ministerial order; and upon the whole my determination is, in the fear of God, to accept your call; trusting in your continuous affections and prayers, and relying upon the spirit and grace of God for assistance to so great a work; that I may be enabled to discharge a good conscience by my fidelity towards souls in this place; earnestly praying, as also desiring an interest in your prayers with me, that the Great Sheperd of the sheep would make me the happy instrument of convincing and converting sinners in this place and building up saints in faith and holiness, that God's blessing may be upon us and his glorious kingdom advanced by us. Amen. From your friend and servant in the Lord,

Philemon Robbins.

Branford, Dec. 27, 1732."

The new minister was the son of Nathaniel Robbins, and the grandson of Rev. Nathaniel Robbins, a Scotchman, who came to this country in 1670 and settled at Charlestown, Massachusetts. After graduation from Harvard, Philemon Robbins studied theology with Rev. Nathaniel Appleton, a Cambridge minister. While thus engaged, he received a call to settle with the church at Harvard, Mass., but declined to accept. Mr. Robbins was of medium stature and was somewhat corpulent. He had a powerful voice, of pleasing quality; a ready command of language, especially in "ex tempore" preaching; and was especially noted for his fervency and strength in public prayer. He was naturally of benevolent disposition, gracious of spirit, and with pleasing manners. Altho by no means a scholar, he was always a popular preacher; was quick to learn, and of retentive memory, but preferred breadth of knowledge rather than complete mastery of more narrow fields. His spirit was that of the present age rather than of the times in which he lived; with the consequence that he was always progressive in thought and message, and often suffered for his advanced views. Two of his sermon manuscripts have been preserved, and are now in the custody of the clerk of the church. In form, each is a small booklet, about one half the dimensions of an ordinary sheet of note paper in size, neatly sewed together, and filled with writing of almost microscopic size. One wonders how they could have been of any possible use in the pulpit.

By vote of the Society, Wednesday, the twenty-fourth day of January, was set apart for the day of ordination. This was later altered to Wednesday, the seventh day of February. Since an Ordination Day was an event of tremendous social importance, in those colonial times, it was felt that the Meeting House would be too small to hold all who desired to attend the service, and so the Society ordered "that no negro servant be admitted to enter ye meeting house on ye ordination Day." At that time about one hundred thirty or the total population of sixteen hundred were black. As a preparation for the day of ordination, Wednesday the twenty-fourth of January, was observed by the whole town as a day of Fasting and Prayer. We are fortunate in having an account of the ordination itself, in Mr. Robbins' own hand, as the first entry on the records of the church. These records, beginning at this time, were kept, as a sort of private journal, by the ministers of the church; there being no church clerk appointed until more than a century later. Mr. Robbins' account of his own ordination is as follows: "The Rev. Mr. Samuel Whittlesey of Wallingford made the first prayer and preached the sermon from Ezezekiel III. 17, 18, 19. Then the Rev. Mr. Jacob Hemingway of East Haven, made a prayer and gave me the charge. Then the Rev. Mr. Samuel Russell of Cohabit (North Guilford), made a prayer. Then the Rev. Mr. Isaac Stiles of North Haven gave me the right hand of fellowship. Then I named the Psalm, 118th Psalm, 4th part, and gave the blessing."

Soon after his ordination, the Society voted that "there should be a pew made for Mr. Robbins on the west part of ye pulpit stairs"; which vote was later altered "to be most agreeable to Mr. Robbins his mind" and "that it should be made on ye west side of ye fore Door next to it, and that ye two hind Seats on ye mens side, Should be taken off for conveniency thereof, and that there should be another pew made between this and ye Gallery Stairs at ye Societys charge and Seated by ye Com<sup>tee</sup> appointed in case Mr. Rosewell Saltonstall cant be prevailed with to alter his place for his pew and take this other. So that those Short Seats between the stairs and ye west part of ye house should be released." It would seem that Capt. Saltonstall did not favor this arrangement, for, soon afterwards, he "moved to ye Society yt he might build his pew in ye place first granted to him, and ye Society complied with his motion and granted him ye liberty of ye two hind seats therefor. The Society voted yt ye Seaters last appointed Should Seat ye pew adjoyning to Mr. Robbins pew, and all those persons that shall be unseated by reason of Capt. Saltonstalls pew: voted that ye negros should be moved to ye hind Seat in ye side gallery on ye west side of ye house. It was agreed that ye place where ye negros did set be made up with Seats by ye Societys Com<sup>tee</sup> unles a certain Sufficient number of persons should appear to build a pew or pews theron at their own cost." A great many negro slaves were owned by Branford people, at that time, Mr. Robbins himself owning one a

little later. They generally were kindly treated, and were received as members of the church, usually without privilege of voting, tho even this right was sometimes given them, as when (July 28, 1732) it was voted that "Ader the negro Ser<sup>vt</sup> of Dea. Russell" be given liberty to vote.

Mr. Robbins came to Branford a bachelor, but he had not long resided in the town before he was captivated by the attractiveness of a young lady whose name was Hannah, the daughter of Isaac and Rebecca Foote. Hannah, for her part, seemed not invulnerable to the attentions of the youthful minister, so they were married on the twenty-fourth day of the last month of 1735. The young couple went to live in the new house which the people of the town had helped Mr. Robbins build, shortly after his settlement. This house was situated upon a road which ran at right angles to the present Montowese Street, entering the meadows on both the east and west sides of that street, and crossing it near Wilford Avenue. This road rejoiced in the euphonious name of "Pig Lane," and upon it were several houses, among them the first Stent house, built by the original Eleazur Stent. The land upon which the Robbins house was erected had been presented to the minister by Samuel Barker, who owned a beautiful estate on Cherry Hill, where he lived after the manner of an old English squire, and this land was but one of the many gifts which sprang from a great friendship between Barker and Robbins. Mrs. Robbins

was a good wife to her husband and bore him nine children, all born in this one house. Their home became famous for its marked hospitality, and her name comes down to us as embodying the virtues of old New Englandry housewifery. All honor to her memory.

Even as the beginning of the pastorate of Samuel Russell was signalized by the outgrowing of the old house of worship and the erection of a new and more commodious one, so was the coming of Philemon Robbins marked by the realization that the old building was inadequate and the determination to replace it with a new and more spacious one. The division of the parish, by the setting off by themselves of the North Farmers, had been more than offset by the rapid growth of the town. Moreover the old house was felt to be not pretentious enough nor sufficiently up to date. Accordingly, February 28, 1738, the Society met and discussed the situation, "considering that ye meeting house is much out of repair and fearing it may be grown too small in ye summer season," and, at an adjourned meeting (March 15), decided to build another house. Nothing more was done, however, until the following October, when it was again voted to build, and the place for the new edifice was fixed upon—a spot "which is on ye westward Side of ye old meeting house and as near thereto as conveniently maybe." "The Dimentions voted and agreed upon were 60 feet in Length, and 44 feet in breadth, and 24 feet posts between Joynts." It was ordered

that there should be gathered together, before the first of the following March, "some boards and Shingles for ye house." As the months went on there seemed some question in peoples' minds as to the wisdom of the dimensions chosen and, in February, it was decided to alter them so that they should be, for length, "64 feet, by ye posts 26 feet."

Work seems to have gone on slowly, for it is not until April 1741, that we read that the committee "should proceed in fraiming ye new meeting house, raising & Covering this following summer"; and it is not until February, of 1744, that the work was sufficiently advanced for the committee to be urged to "go forward with ye meeting house for ye finishing all ye inside work thereof this summer if it can be." In August of that year, the committee was given "liberty of taking the timber and boards out of ye old meeting house therefor what should be fitting." The building would seem to have been completed early in September 1744, for, upon the seventeenth day of that month, it was directed "that ye old meeting house should be pulled down." The material from the old house, with the exception of the glass, which was kept for the new building, was sold for about sixty pounds.

An old print of this third home of the Branford Church has come down to us; tho it depicts the building as it appeared more than fifty years later, or at the beginnings of Mr. Gillett's term of office, rather than as it looked at the time of its erection. The original building had no clock nor steeple.



The steeple was not added until 1803, and the clock was placed therein in the summer of 1804. There is an interesting story concerning the erection of the steeple. It happened that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the newly reorganized Episcopal Church purchased some fine lumber to be used for building a steeple for their new church, but their funds proved insufficient for the carrying out of their plans, and so they were compelled to sell the timbers, which they had prepared, to the Congregational Society, and they were used in the erection of the Congregational steeple. Inasmuch as the feeling between the two churches was not very cordial at that time, this was regarded, by the Episcopalians, as a cause for much chagrin, and, by the Congregationalists, as an occasion of considerable satisfaction. The money for making these additions was gained from the sale of lumber, from the Society lands, and by the establishment and operation of "salt works" at Indian Neck, for obtaining salt from the sea water, by evaporation.

The new meeting house was situated nearly in front of the present edifice, but faced almost in the opposite direction. It was occupied by the church for practically a century, or until the erection of the present building, in its original form, in 1843. About a month before its completion, "Capt. Jno Russell, Isac Harrison, Deacon Rose, Capt. Nath<sup>l</sup> Harrison & Will<sup>m</sup> Goodrich, were appointed a com<sup>ttee</sup> to Seat ye new meeting house and in seating

to have regard to Age, Dignity & ye rates Layed therefor." It was not until February of 1745-6 that it was voted "yt there be a floor Laid on ye Beems in ye meeting house"; and it would seem that the building was first painted, inside, the preceding summer, for it was then voted that the amount remaining due "for coulering ye inside of ye meeting house" be paid. Upon April Fool's Day 1746, a vote was passed "yt ye 2 pews in ye Gallery in ye meeting house on ye east side be for ye Women to Set in, & ye 3 west pews be for ye men to set in & yt ye Society Look upon it Disorderly for ye men to Intrude into ye Womens part or go up & down ye womens Stairs or ye women to intrude into ye mens part or go up & down ye mens stairs & also yt ye mens part be seperated from ye womens with a rail." Upon the same day it was agreed "yt Capt. Harrison Tune ye Psalm on ye Sabbath & other Times of Divine worship" and also "yt Jno. Russell Jun<sup>r</sup> sit in ye 3rd seat in ye Squair Body of ye meeting House to be helpfull in Singing." The church records contain an interesting entry, under the date of February 5, 1763, where it is stated that it was decided "to request ye Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr. Robbins to make use of Doc<sup>r</sup> Watts Imitation of ye Psalms of David one half ye Day in Publick Worship instead of ye New England Psalms now in use among us." This meant a distinct improvement in the quality of the church service, for the "New England Psalm Book," while exceedingly interesting to bibliophiles, as an anti-

quity, was an atrocious attempt at versification of the Psalms, with such an absolute lack of rhyme or meter that it is nearly inconceivable that the book should ever have been used successfully. At the same time that this change was made Mr. Robbins was also requested "to introduce ye Practice of constantly reading some part of ye Holy Scriptures in ye Publick Worship of God." Previously to this time, the only way in which the Bible had been read in the church service was when it was "expounded" by the minister, i.e.—when the minister would read a chapter, phrase by phrase, commenting upon each phrase as he progressed in the reading, and making, practically, a sort of exegetical sermon of the performance. The uninterrupted reading of a portion of Scripture was unknown in early New England worship.

Before Mr. Robbins had been pastor many years, a granddaughter was born to the Branford Church. The extreme northern portion of the town was becoming thickly settled, and soon there was a growing desire among the people of that region for services of their own. They were joined in this wish by certain outlying families from Guilford and Wallingford. Meetings were held at the home of Isaac Ingraham as early as 1744. A meeting house, fifty feet long and forty feet wide, was built in 1746; and on June 13, 1750, the Northford Church was organized, with nineteen charter members. All of these original members were men, but the next month twenty-two women were added, and

one man, the women being mostly the wives of the first members. The first pastor of the new church was Rev. Wareham Williams, grandson of Rev. John Williams of Deerfield, who had been carried to Canada by the Indians as a captive in 1704, and the son of Rev. Stephen Williams, the pastor at Long Meadow. He was ordained on the same day that the church was organized, and he served as pastor of the church for thirty-eight years. He was also secretary of Yale College and a member of the Yale Corporation. Of more than usual interest is the fact that his daughter, Anna, was the wife of three ministers in turn, two of them, Rev. Jason Atwater and Rev. Lynde Huntington, being successors of Mr. Robbins in the pastorate of the Branford Church. The later history of the Northford Church is an interesting one, and has been ably set forth in a sermon, preached on the occasion of one of its anniversaries, and privately printed. The church at Northford has exerted an influence far out of proportion to its size upon the life of the state, and has furnished a notable number of men of large calibre and unusual talent to New England life.

Returning, now, to the history of the Branford Church, we come upon events of epochal importance; the story of the outlawing of Philemon Robbins, for heresy, for rebellion and for crimes against the state, and of how minister and church alike, for many years defied the power and sentence of the Consociation and lived a separate life,

debarred from the fellowship of the sister churches. It is a long narrative, but it is well worth the retelling because the story of the struggle is the story of a battle waged, for the real Congregational principle of liberty of speech and conscience, against the false doctrine of a bygone day. Philemon Robbins has been vindicated by Time and his lonely struggle with long odds has been crowned with victory.

We are to be congratulated in having for our sources two pamphlets, both very rare, presenting the opposite sides of the controversy. In the first of these pamphlets we have Mr. Robbins' statement of his own case. It is entitled:

"A Plain Narration of the Proceedings of the Reverend Association and Consociation of New Haven County Against the Rev. Mr. Robbins of Branford, since the Year 1741; and the Doings of his Church and People, with some Remarks by Another Hand, in a Letter to a Friend. By Philemon Robbins, A.M., and Pastor of the First Church in Branford. Acts 4:23 'And reported all that the Chief Priests and Elders had said unto them.' Boston: Printed and Sold by S. Kneeland and T. Green in Queen Street 1747."

The other pamphlet was an answer to this statement by Robbins, and was prepared by order of the Consociation, and was probably written, in large part, by Rev. Nathaniel Chauncy, of Derby. Its title-page reads as follows:

"Defence and Doings of the Reverend Consociation and Association of New Haven County respecting Mr. Philemon Robbins, of Branford; or An Answer to Mr.

Robbins Plain Narrative and the remarks annexed thereto. Wherein many of the false representations of that narrative are corrected, and the plain truth is faithfully declared; and the insufficiency of the Remarkers Essay to vindicate Mr. Robbins is discovered. By a member of the Consociation and Association of New Haven County. iii John 9, 10 ver: I wrote unto the Church; but Diotrephees who loved to have the preeminence among them, received us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words.

Job 23, 3: Now hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is.

Job 15, 3: Thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.

Prov. 18, 17: He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him. Ver. 13: He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

Printed for the Consociation and Association of New Haven County, 1748."

One is unfavorably impressed, at the start, by the seemingly malicious tone of this latter leaflet, but it is needful to remember that common courtesy and restrained speech were notable for their absence in the literary style of the polemical pamphlets of that period, and that the moderation of Mr. Robbins' language was the exception, and the bitterness of the other was the rule. So much for the sources, which we shall follow, in as unprejudiced a manner as we may; let us now turn to the narrative itself.

When our first forefathers began the settlement of New England they brought with them a stern but virile faith and an earnest piety. The impress of this vital and consecrated Godliness was felt for

decades, and laid its impress upon the new formed state. Their forsaking of home and country, for sake of conscience; their fearful struggles with cold and famine and hardship, in the subduing of the wilderness; the isolation and the perils of their colonial life, with the corresponding erasure of the ordinary props and aids of living, and the throwing of every man upon his own resource and initiative; above all the uncertainty of each new day and month, and the critical danger of future impending disaster; all of these made it easy for the fathers to appreciate their utter dependence upon Almighty God, and to believe that the only hope for their future, in the new land, lay in the protecting providence of His Divine Sovereignty. Thus it is not strange that man and God walked often together, in these days when man knew so well the weak inabilities of man, nor that the early commonwealths were strongholds of Godly faith. Men realized their utter dependence upon God, and with that realization there came blessing. But this happy condition did not endure for long. As the perils of the wilderness were faced and conquered, and as the hand of man was placed upon the face of nature and her unkind obstacles to his plans were one by one removed, life became less dangerous, less uncertain, and less difficult. Men became more confident of their own self sufficiency and of their own ability to cope with their lessened daily problems. After a while came comfort, then luxury, and luxury is ever the enemy of religion. God's

house began to be neglected, his ordinances forsaken, the stern oldtime piety softened. Faith became weak, and conscience hardened, and characters flabby. It is the old story of ungrateful humanity. When men face desperate need they grasp God's hand, and when He has succored them they forget Him.

So it came to pass that the early years of the eighteenth century witnessed a decadence in the spiritual life of the New England Colonies. Church and state were more and more separated; the Calvinistic theology, which had been a tower of strength to the Pilgrims, became devitalized; and the ordinances of the church were no longer indispensable, as of old. Church membership ceased to be synonymous with deep personal experience, and the erstwhile fires of zealous piety died to mere smouldering coals. The contrast was marked, and it was deeply felt by the leaders of the churches.

It was in this Laodicean time that Jonathan Edwards began his great revival, at Northampton, which soon spread thruout the colonies. Coincidentally with this revival of religion, George Whitefield, the noted English evangelist, began a series of five tours thruout the New England settlements. Upon his first tour, in 1740, he was everywhere received with the utmost enthusiasm and by great multitudes. But he was a man of fierce emotions, and was often censorious, to the point of harsh invective. Especially bitter was he against the



ministers of the day, whom he felt were unconverted and spiritually blind; and he did not hesitate to express that bitterness, often in immoderate and unjust language. So it is scarcely astonishing that he made many determined enemies, or that some, of colder temperament than himself, considered him mentally unbalanced. Upon his later tours he found many towns and churches closed against him, among these most of those of the New Haven colony. Branford church, however, welcomed him, to the displeasure of the clergy of the neighborhood.

As many a good minister, in these later days, has brought discredit upon himself by an endeavor to "ape" "Billy" Sunday, doubtlessly in a sincere effort to reproduce the spiritual achievements of that well known evangelist, but with a lamentable unconsciousness of the disparity in genius between himself and his pattern; so was it in the days of Whitefield. Ministers began to imitate him, upon every hand, and many of them were guilty of wild excesses which worked havoc with the reputation of their master. Speedily New England became divided into two parties: those who condemned the work of the evangelists—the "Old Lights," and those who defended them and felt that their labors were renewing the spiritual life of the people—the "New Lights." In reality the distinction between the parties ran much deeper, and the former party were the conservatives of the time, and the latter

the liberals. Feeling was bitter indeed, and each party was arrayed in a struggle to the death against the other.

Now it happened that the "Old Lights" held the reins of power in Connecticut and that the region about New Haven was a veritable stronghold of them; and it also happened that the Reverend Mr. Philemon Robbins was not one of their number, and that so they set themselves to work for his undoing. The means were not far to seek. Accurately and cleverly perceiving that a sure way to put an end to the activities of the itinerant evangelists would be to confine the activities of the "New Light" ministers to their own parishes, the New Haven Consociation, at a meeting held at Guilford in 1741, had passed the following vote: "that for any minister to enter into another minister's parish, and preach or administer the Seals of the Covenant, without the consent of, or in opposition to the settled minister of the parish, is disorderly. Notwithstanding, if a considerable number of people in the parish are desirous to hear another minister preach, provided the same be orthodox and sound in the Faith, and not notoriously faulty in censuring other persons, or guilty of any other scandal, we think it ordinarily advisable for the minister of the parish to gratify them by giving his consent upon their suitable application to him for it, unless neighboring ministers should advise against it." This vote seems very reasonable, at first sight, but, if examined carefully and

thoughtfully, will be seen to leave small chance for any minister who was not in favor with his "Old Light" neighbors to preach outside of his own boundaries.

The vote was supplemented, strengthened and made state-wide, by an act of the General Court, soon after, which read in part as follows: "If any minister or ministers, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall presume to preach in any parish, not under his immediate care and charge, the minister of the parish where he shall so offend, or the civil authority, or any of the committee of said parish, shall give information thereof, in writing under their hands to the clerk of the society of the parish where such offending minister doth belong, which clerk shall receive such information and lodge and keep the same on file in his office, and no assistant or justice of the peace in this colony, shall sign any warrant for collecting any minister's rate, without first receiving a certificate from the clerk of the society or parish where such rate is to be collected, that no such information as is mentioned hath been received by him or lodged in his office." This act was rigorously enforced and, under it, several ministers were driven from the ministry. A Mr. Humphreys, minister at Derby, was deposed for officiating at a Baptist meeting; Timothy Allen, of New Haven, was expelled for stating that "the reading of the Scriptures, without the Spirit's aid, will no more convert a sinner, than reading an old Almanack"—

surely not a very blasphemous remark; while Mr. Todd, of Northbury, Mr. Lee, of Salisbury, and Mr. Leavenworth, of Waterbury, were also cast into the outer darkness and disfellowshipped, upon equally weighty pretexts. The truth, we cannot but be convinced, is that the conservative majority were out after the blood of the liberal few and were not scrupulous about how they obtained it. The turn of Philemon Robbins was to come soon, and the score against him was a heavy one.

Mr. Robbins was an earnest and ardent leader among the "New Lights." It was by his influence that the Branford church had invited Whitefield to preach a second time, despite the mandate of the State Association that "it would by no means be advisable for any of our Ministers to admitt him into their Pulpits, or for any of our people to attend upon his Preaching and Administrations." He had also held special evangelistic meetings, in his parish, and had induced his people to join in the special services of prayer, for a revival of religion, which had originated with the churches of Scotland. From time to time he had invited outside assistance, notably the evangelist Davenport, who was in ill repute with the conservatives for his extravagances. Yet, when Davenport began singing loudly, upon his way to the meeting, Mr. Robbins reproved him openly for unseemly conduct, he himself having small sympathy for excesses but only a very earnest desire for a spiritual reawaken-

ing among his people. But, for all these things, Robbins was in disfavor with the conservatives.

A number of years before Mr. Robbins came to Branford, a little group of Baptists began holding meetings in the town of Wallingford. They ordained Mr. John Merriman, as their minister, and organized a separate church, refusing to pay their church rates to the Congregational Society. By the advice of Governor Talcott, the Wallingford Society let them alone and did not attempt to collect these taxes. The Society and the Wallingford minister, Rev. Samuel Whittlesey, a prominent member of the "Old Light" party, were very sensitive about the presence and activities of this Baptist body. During the closing months of the year 1741, these Wallingford Baptists, who had caught the revival spirit which was abroad in the state, were holding a series of Evangelistic services, much to the resentment of the established Society. Through the influence of a certain Baptist lady who had attended his services in Branford, Mr. Robbins received the following invitation to participate in these special meetings:

"To Mr. Robbins, Branford.

Sir:—After suitable respects to yourself, this note is to inform you that Mr. Bellamy has been with us at Wallingford, and preached in our Baptist Society to very good satisfaction and success on several persons both of our people, and also those of your denomination, with whom we desire to join heartily in the internals of religion, though we can't in form; so that it seems to be the desire

of both denominations here, that yourself would oblige us with a sermon or two as soon as you can after the next week; and please to send me when. This is also my desire for the good of souls and the glory of God.

Sir, yours in good affection,

John Merriman, Elder.

Wallingford, Dec. 23, 1741."

The invitation offered an attractive opportunity for an act of neighborliness and was, as such, accepted. But, upon the day before that set for the service, Mr. Robbins received two notes from members of the Congregational Society in Wallingford, and also notes from the Rev. Mr. Hemingway and from Rev. Mr. Stiles, requesting him not to attend the meeting. Robbins could not, however, feel that there was any good reason for breaking his engagement. He attended the meeting, preached two sermons to large congregations, was received enthusiastically, and was consulted, after the meeting, by several people about their souls' welfare. Both he and the Baptist people felt that the services had been much blessed.

It was on January 6th, 1742, that Robbins preached to the Wallingford Baptists. It is said that he also preached for dissenting congregations at Haddam and at Middlefield. His enemies made the most of their opportunity. The Wallingford case was a flagrant violation of the rule of the Guilford gathering, and of the act of the General Court. The offence was heightened by the fact that Mr. Robbins had previously been invited by

Mr. Whittlesey, the Congregational minister, to preach in his church and had declined to do so. The affair was brought to the formal attention of the Consociation at its meeting at New Haven, February 9, 1742. The following complaint was entered by Theophilus Yale, a delegate from Wallingford:

“The subscriber, do certify, in way of complaint, to this reverend Consociation, that on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of January last past, the Rev. Mr. Philemon Robbins did enter into the First Society of Wallingford, and preach in a disorderly manner, in contempt of the authority of this Consociation, without the consent of the Rev. Mr. Whittlesey, pastor of said society; contrary to the act of the Guilford Council; contrary to an act of this Consociation, and contrary to the desire of his neighboring ministers, and a great number of church members in Wallingford.

Theophilus Yale.”

Mr. Robbins was present and defended himself against the accusation. He claimed that he had not been present at the Guilford meeting, that the doings of that meeting had never been accepted by the Consociation, and that the Baptists in Wallingford were, by reason of their exemption from the payment of church rates to the Congregational Society, practically an independent parish. He also said that he saw “much about being contrary to the law of the Guilford Council, of the Consociation, and of his brother ministers, but nothing about its being contrary to the law of *God*.” His defence was deemed unsatisfactory, and it was

insisted that he should confess his fault and make apology. He declined to do so, and they offered him over night to reconsider, but, upon his insisting that he should not change his mind, they passed the following resolutions :

"At a meeting of the Consociation of New Haven county, convened by and according to adjournment at New Haven, February 9th, 1742. A complaint being given in by Theophilus Yale, Esq., a member of the First church in Wallingford, against the Rev. Philemon Robbins, pastor of the First church in Branford, within this county, that the said Mr. Philemon Robbins has preached in said First society in Wallingford, in a disorderly and offensive manner, as by said complaint is set forth and laid before the Consociation :

"Resolved, That the Rev. Mr. Robbins so preaching was disorderly.

"Resolved, That the Rev. Mr. Philemon Robbins should not sit as a member of this council for his disorderly preaching."

This action did not go far enough to satisfy the Branford pastor's ecclesiastical enemies. Accordingly they worked among the malcontents of his own home church, with such good result that, at the next meeting of the Consociation, a complaint was read which emanated from his own people. Acting upon the complaint the Consociation sent to Mr. Robbins, who was not present, the following note :

"The Association of the County of New Haven convened at New Cheshire May 31, 1743. To the Rev. Mr. Philemon Robbins, Pastor of the First Church in Bran-



ford. Reverend Sir, and dear Brother; By a paper, given into this Association by one of the members of your church, and signed by six members of the same, we are given to understand that there is an uneasiness among a number of your people, with your conduct and management, in sundry particulars; and, hoping that it may be of good service, we have desired a number of our body, viz.: the Rev. Messrs. Jacob Hemingway, Samuel Russell, Samuel Hall, Isaac Stiles, and Johnathan Merrick, to repair to Branford on the second Tuesday of June next to make inquiry into the difficulties among your people, and shall rejoice if they may be instrumental of good and peace among you; and hoping you will take this in good part, and treat the motion candidly, we heartily wish you well.

Test, Thomas Ruggles, Scribe.

By order of Association."

The charges which had been entered against Mr. Robbins' conduct were the following five:

"1. That Mr. Robbins has set up lectures, without a vote of the church for it.

2. That he denies the platform.

3. That he has baptized a child at New Haven.

4. That he is a promoter of divisions and separations.

5. That he admits members of a separate church at New Haven to the Communion."

Mr. Robbins was much surprised at the accusations, and still more so when he discovered that, of the six subscribers to them, one was an aged man who was mentally irresponsible, and three were persons who had been disciplined. He easily satisfied his accusers, and the matter was dropped, but the affair itself was very far from being ended.

From time to time new complaints were entered, and the matter was never long allowed to slumber. Philemon Robbins endured the matter as patiently as he might, never seeking to retaliate against his persecutors, and trusting that time would either vindicate his course or wear out the energy of his enemies. He was not afraid to openly own that, under the circumstances, he had been unwise to preach to the Baptists of Wallingford, but he neither could nor would admit that he had been either morally or spiritually culpable. After his first appearance before the Consociation, he had written,

"I took my leave of the Consociation, and expected no more trouble or complaints about my preaching to the Baptists." Later, when new charges began to thicken, he had added this memorandum; "The crime is preaching to the Baptists, and the punishment is being secluded the Consociation. But, unexpectedly, the punishment is turned into a *crime*, and becomes the burden of all the following complaints against me."

Rapidly the charges against him had been multiplied, being drawn from all possible quarters and made to cover every conceivable aspect of his ministry, until the original accusation was all but lost sight of. Year by year he was cited before the Consociation, and still the matter grew.

It will be interesting and illuminating, as showing how deep was the rancor of his adversaries, and how far they were ready to go in their endeavor to

discredit and undo him, to read one of these later indictments which they brought against him. Here it is.

"1. That he, the said Mr. Robbins, has in public taken it upon him to determine the state of infants, dying in infancy, declaring that they were as odious in the sight of God, as snakes and vipers were to us; and left it wholly in the dark whether there were any saved or not.

"2. That he had assumed to himself the prerogative of God, the righteous judge, in judging the condition of the dead, in a funeral sermon, saying that they were in hell, to the great grief of mourning friends and others.

"3. That in his public preaching he had been guilty of speaking evil of dignities; declaring that the leaders or rulers of the people were opposers of the glorious works of God in the land; and comparing our civil authority to and with Darius, who cast Daniel in the lion's den.

"4. In judging and declaring those persons carnal and unconverted that did not approve of the late religious stir that has been made in the land; and in the improvement of his sermon dividing them, and calling one part, that is, the approvers, the children of God, and branding the other part with the name and character of opposers.

"5. That said Mr. Robbins has also publicly and censoriously judged those that did not fall in with and impute the religious stir in the land (which he calls a glorious work of God) to be the work of God's spirit, declaring such were guilty of unpardonable sin.

"6. He has publicly asserted, and taught and laid down, that a man might be sincere in religion, and a strict observer of the church and yet be a hypocrite.

"7. Said Mr. Robbins has publicly reflected upon and reviled the standing ministers of this land, calling them Arminians, and comparing them with and to false prophets, putting himself in the place of Micajah."

Regarding his doctrine, they charged :

"1. That he has publicly taught us, that there is no promise in all the Bible that belongs to sinners; thereby frustrating the covenant of God's free grace, and the condescension and compassion of God, and his Son, our Saviour, to poor, lost and perishing sinners.

"2. That there is no direction in all the Bible how men should come to Christ, nor could he direct any persons how they should come to Him; thereby rendering the study and search of the Holy Scriptures, at least an unsafe and insufficient way of finding Christ, and the preaching thereof useless.

"3. He has publicly taught that it is as easy for persons to know when they are converted, as it is to know noonday from midnight darkness; making the only sure evidence of conversion to consist in inward feeling, and a sense of their love to God.

"4. He has declared in public, that believers never doubt of their interest in Christ, after conversion; and if they do, it is the sign of an hypocrite; rendering sanctification no evidence of conversion or justification, and that believers are never in the dark.

"5. He has also taught that God could easier convert the seat a man sits on than convert a moral man; and that the most vicious or vile person stands as fair a chance for conviction and conversion as the strictest moral man: thereby making holiness and obedience to the moral law, no way necessary to be found in men for their salvation.

"6. Mr. Robbins has taught that there are some sinners that Christ never died for, nor did he come to save them; thereby perverting the great doctrines of redemption in the gospel, and rendering all endeavors in men to obtain salvation, useless; teaching Arminianism and blending the covenant of works and the covenant of grace together."

Respecting his enthusiasm, which especially vexed them, they complained :

"1. That bitter and censorious spirit discovered by the said Mr. Robbins, against all, even civil magistrates, as well as ministers, who do not think the commotions in the land which bear the name of religion, a glorious work of God, and the effect of the agency of the Holy Spirit, declaring all such to be guilty of the unpardonable sin.

"2. In that strange heat of spirit, under which the said Mr. Robbins has acted; discovered in perpetual uneasiness, or craving to be preaching, going into those many unscriptural night meetings, and frequent public preaching under a religious pretence; consorting with and improving those to preach and carry on in public, as well as in those private meetings, that have been most forward and famous for their enthusiasm in the present day.

"3. In the spirit of pride and conceitedness, and expectation to be believed only upon positive and bold assertion, discovered by said Robbins; among other instances thereof, by publicly declaring, in a sermon, that the standing ministers in this land were Arminians, and calling them false prophets, while he put himself in the place of Micajah before Ahab, in I Kings XXII, pronouncing these words upon it, That if the body of the people were in the way to eternal life, the Lord had not spoken by him.

"4. That Mr. Robbins has publicly taught, that unconverted persons have no right to praise God."

They also found fault with his personal conduct, condemning:

"1. Mr. Robbins' earnestness in promoting and improving strolling or travelling preachers; and improving those that were most disorderly, to preach and exhort in the society; more especially at one such meeting carried on at his house, by Messrs. Brainard and Buel; and another at the same place, carried on by Messrs. Wheelock and Munson; to the dishonor of religion, to the just offence of many of the church and people, and to the destruction of peace and gospel order, in church and society.

"2. His introducing Mr. Davenport to preach and exhort, and also his man to pray and sing, at the time when he went through the country, singing along the streets; attended with this aggravating circumstance, that it was on sacrament-day; to the great confusion and disturbance of the church, and profaning the sabbath in this society.

"3. His preaching in Wallingford, in the meeting-house of the Anabaptists there; and that contrary to the desire of a great number of the people at Wallingford, requesting him that he would not, and to the advice of neighboring ministers to the contrary."

We will forbear to comment upon these charges, further than to call attention to the puerility of some of them and the exceeding strangeness in the nature of many others. One would think, for instance, that a "strange uneasiness to be preaching" might be considered rather more commendable than otherwise, in a minister. We shall see what the church thought about them, in a moment.

On August 18, 1744, the members of the church voted to request Mr. Whitefield to preach for them again. This brought about a new and hotter quarrel with the Consociation. Mr. Robbins decided to appeal to the Ecclesiastical Society for support and, on October 14th, 1745, he "came into ye meeting Desiring yt he might have Leave to Lay ye states of his Difficulty with ye Association of N. Haven County before ye Society." The Society voted to grant his request and, feeling that the matter was too important for immediate action, adjourned until Monday, the twenty-first. At that time they passed the following vote:

"That this Society is of opinion yt what ye Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr. Robbins our pastor has offered to ye Association of New Haven County relating to his Preaching to ye Baptists at Wallingford is sufficient.

This Society Desire ye Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr. Robbins to Continue in ye ministry among us notwithstanding his preaching to ye Baptists & what ye association of New Haven County has done thereon.

That as a particular People have Right to Choose their own minister & no ecclesiastical authority has Right to Impose one upon them without their vote & consent, or to depose a minister when he is regularly ordained with ye vote & consent of his People . . . We desire ye Rev<sup>d</sup> Consociation & Association not to send any Counsellors or Com<sup>tees</sup> among us unless ye Society desires.

That we cannot submit to ye Acts & Conclusion of any Counsellors respecting ye ministry among us yt are made without ye vote & consent of this Society."

Acting in consonance with the Society, on November 4, 1745, the church voted as follows:

"1. That we renounce the Saybrook platform and shall not receive it as a rule of government and discipline in this church.

"2. That we declare this church to be a Congregational church.

"3. That we receive the Scripture of the Old and New Testament as the only perfect rule and platform of church government and discipline.

"4. That though we receive the Scriptures as the only perfect rule, yet as we know of no human composure that comes nearer to the Scriptures in matters of church government and discipline than the Cambridge platform, so we approve of that for substance, and take it for our platform, agreeably to the word of God.

"5. That we are not hereby straightened in our charity, but are free to hold communion, not only with Congrega-

tional churches, and church members that are in good standing, but with those called Presbyterian and also with those under the Saybrook platform regimen."

This was a declaration of war, with a vengeance, and also one of independence. Realizing the hopelessness of further devotion to their former strategy, the "Old Light" leaders adopted new tactics, and sought to discredit the above votes by declaring that they represented the opinions of a minority party only; and also endeavored to win over the allegiance of as many members as possible to their cause. As a proof that these votes embodied the sentiments of almost the whole church, thirty-one members subscribed their names to the church vote, in an open meeting, and fifty-one persons affixed their signatures to the vote of the Society. There is not the slightest foundation for believing that, at any time, were there ever more than a very small percentage of Mr. Robbins' people who did not agree with and support their minister.

A council was called, by the Consociation, to meet at the house of John Taintor, in Branford, on the last Tuesday of September 1746, and Mr. Robbins was summoned before it. The session was an acrimonious one, and resulted in further condemnation of Mr. Robbins and of the Branford Church. The next step in the conflict developed when, doubtless at the instigation of outsiders, certain of the minority party in the church endeavored to apply the act of the General Court, and to prevent the



payment of Mr. Robbins' salary. Angered by this action, the Society immediately added to that salary one hundred pounds.

They also felt, as did the church, that the time had come to assert their opposition to the infringement upon their rights, by the Consociation, more explicitly and sharply. Accordingly, at a meeting of the church on January 22, 1747, the articles of complaint against Mr. Robbins which had been carried into the council, being read, together with his answers thereto, it was voted that:

"1. We are of opinion that what is contained in the articles of charge against the Pastor of this church respecting Doctrine and principle is very wrongfully and injuriously charged, and disagreeable to the known course and tenor of his preaching—We are generally steady attendants on his ministry & don't remember that he has ever expressed himself as charged in those articles—and as to what respects his conduct, we apprehend it wrongfully represented in the articles of charge—indeed his admitting Mr. Davenport to preach at that time & so Messrs. Buel and Brainard to hold a meeting at his house, as they did carry it on, was what we could not some of us, so well approve of under the circumstances and we don't think he would act in the same way again.

"2. We think Mr. Robbins' answers to said articles are according to truth, and agreeable to his known Principles and Doctrine. Some of us remember the particular passages in his sermons which are quoted in his answers to said articles and they truly represent what was delivered.

"3. We think Mr. Robbins preaches the Doctrines of Grace more clearly and pungently than in some of the first years of his ministry among us and yet we have much reason to fear our uneasy Bretheren and Neighbors, especially some of the principle men among them are dis-

satisfied on account of those Doctrines which doctrines for our part, we think are clearly revealed in the word of God, adheared to by the reformed churches as appears by their confessions of faith and catechisms, and we trust God has and will imprint them on our hearts, and enable us to maintain them as long as we live.

"4. That the above votes be signed by the Deacons of this church in behalf of the church. . . . Accordingly we who heartily join with our Bretheren in the above votes subscribe our names.

John Russell	} Deacons of the Church in Branford.
Samuel Rose	

The Society held a like meeting, on the second day of November 1747. It was a wrathful one. The records of the doings of the council were not even allowed to be read in the meeting. After a warm discussion, sentiment crystallized in the following declaration:

"Yt whereas ye first church of Christ in Branford was settled on, or agreeable to ye Platform Drawn up or agreed upon at Cambridge in ye year 1648 agreeable to which ye said church ruled and governed in Peace & whereas after ye settlement of a Platform of Church Government at Saybrook ye sd church with their minister did once or twice choose their messengers to attend ye Consociation of ye County but did not renounce ye form of Government on which ye sd church was settled nor vote themselves under ye Saybrook Platform & whereas ye sd first church which is now in this Society being under such circumstances, settled the Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr. Philemon Robins in ye ministry here who was chosen by this Society and sd church for their minister & Pastor, who has continued in sd office to General Satisfaction & whereas by reason of some late Difference arising by means of some

uneasy Persons in this Society, it was found necessary yt both ye church & Society should more explicitly declare which rule of Government they would agree to & be Governed by, therefor ye Church in this Society at their meeting Nov<sup>r</sup> 4th 1745 Declared their renunciation of ye SayBrook Platform afors<sup>d</sup> & Declared ye same to be a Congregational Church, & this Society at their meeting Octr 21st 1745, Declared their Denial to be Governed by or Submission to ye Acts or conclusions of Counsells formed on ye Saybrook Platform, Without their being called with ye consent of this Society & whereas Notwithstanding ye church in this Society is Congregational, & yt this Society agree with ye Church in those principles, yet ye Consociation of New Haven County since ye said 4th of November on ye Complaint of one member of sd Church, assumed to Themselves a Pretended Government & jurisdiction over this Church & Society & have without hearing ye Parties or persons concerned, Pretended to come into Conclusions respecting our Rev<sup>d</sup> Elder & without knowing ye Truth from him, ye Church or this Society, have, as we are credibly Informed passed a sentence by which they Endeavor to Depose him, ye sd Mr. Robbins . . . Wherefor lest such an Extraordinary step should tend to our Disturbance & Create Scruples in weak minds, ye Society do now by this their vote, Declare yt we owned the sd Mr. Robbins to be our Lawfull & Worthy minister & do now renewedly Declare ye Continuance of our choice of him to be our minister according to ye Law of this Government & further Declare yt we are of opinion yt ye sd conclusions of ye sd Consociation are not by this Society to be acknowledged or regarded."

These two declarations made the breach between the church and the Consociation absolute. From this time, and for many years, the church in Bran-

ford held no fellowship with the churches of the vicinage and became, to all intents and purposes, an independent body, tho still affirming themselves true to their denomination. Certain of the dissenters in the congregation appealed to the General Assembly for intervention. The Assembly recommended another council, and the Society called one, to convene on Wednesday June 29th, inviting, as members, certain ministers from various parts of the state, whose names had been recommended by the Assembly. The Council did not meet. In July, the Society invited them again, this time for the first Wednesday in August. But, judging, perhaps, discretion to be the better part of valor, the ministers again failed to appear. Here the matter ended, and the Branford Church and the Consociation went their separate ways. It was not until June 8, 1760, that the church received any further communication from the Consociation. At that time it received an invitation to join with its sister churches in ordaining Mr. Noah Willis of West Haven, "it being the first letter this church has received from the moderator of the Consociation of this County since our vote of refusing the Saybrook and taking the Cambridge Platform." The invitation was accepted, with the provision "that our sending messengers to the Consociation and their acting in the Consociation as occasion may serve shall not be looked upon as an argument of our Being under the regimen of the SayBrook agreement or Platform." Deacon Samuel Rose

accompanied Mr. Robbins to the ordination of Mr. Willis, and thus friendly relations were resumed. The church continued to fellowship with its sisters, more and more frequently, and the old struggle was, if not forgotten, at least passed over in silence.

Before leaving this story of the tribulations of Philemon Robbins we may, wisely, make two or three comments concerning it. Let us concede, in the first place, that which Robbins himself was quite ready to admit, that his acceptance of the invitation to preach to the Baptist congregation in Wallingford was not wise, under the circumstances. But let us also assert, and here too with Mr. Robbins, that there was no shadow of moral wrong about it. The issue was not one of criminality; it was an issue between the contrasting convictions of two incompatible conceptions of church polity. Thereby is the whole story raised from the realm of petty enmities and personal bickering to the level of participation in a conflict of much moment in the preservation of our church polity and faith. Let us see just what, in this larger aspect, the significance of this conflict was.

Coming to these shores in order that they might escape a church order intolerant of the dictates of their minds and hearts, the New England fathers, contrary to what is often ignorantly believed, did not set up a state in which there was liberty of faith and conduct. Early Congregationalism was a state religion and the churches were as much "established" churches as any they had left behind,

in England. Only, for the most part, they were established *churches* instead of an established *church*. That is to say, that while everybody was legally bound to support the church set up in his community, and heresy and even non-attendance were severely dealt with, there was, at the beginning, no authority higher than the local church. Each church was independent and such gathering of the churches in Associations or Councils as there was, was for purpose of mutual counsel only, and the acts or resolutions of those gatherings had only advisory force. But, as we have seen, when the Saybrook Synod, of which Samuel Russell had been an influential member, devised the system of "Consociations" they introduced into Congregationalism a legislative and judicial body which was to have superior and mandatory power over the local church. The idea of such a body was borrowed from the Presbyterian theory and is totally at variance with the fundamental ideas of our denomination.

It was against the right of such a body to dictate to a local church or minister, what should or should not be said or done, that Philemon Robbins, supported solidly by the Branford church, rebelled. He claimed that he had absolute right to preach when and where he chose, and to invite whom he would to occupy his own pulpit, so long as his people were satisfied. The Consociation asserted that he could not preach where, when or what they should choose to legislate against.

The issue is a sharp one and, tho he and his people stood nearly alone in their time, we of to-day are almost universally agreed with them. We honor him for his protestant courage, and his fellow ministers grew into days when they learned to honor and respect him too. We also admire the breadth of mind which allowed him, in the days when men of other creeds were heretics and damned, to meet those not of his fold in fellowship and to see, in their invitation, a call from God. Inexpedient his conduct may have been, but his consequent tribulations were those of a man of larger heart and vision than his peers, of one "persecuted for righteousness sake." "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Little information has come down to us of what happened in Branford church in the latter years of Robbins' pastorate. The years which preceded and followed 1776 were too filled with political significance for men to give more than necessary attention to church affairs. They did more than they wrote. It will be always a matter of regret to us that we have not the story of those thrilling days. What has been saved is mostly passing remarks and allusions. The depreciation of currency, the hardness of times, come first to notice. The salary is constantly readjusted, to keep pace with the decreased purchasing power of money. Salt works are established, at Indian Neck, in 1777, in an effort to add to the Society's financial resources, and lumber is sold, and more of the

lands are leased. We read of "foot guards" and "horse guards" drilling on the Green, and of a regiment of five hundred "Leather-Caps" being recruited by Col. Douglass, of Northford, which joined Washington's army at New York. A ship of war was built on the Branford River, and her guns were borrowed and used against the British, at East Haven. Coast guards patrolled the shore, from Branford Point to Stony Creek, and Branford men fought well in the new navy, and some of them were captured and died on prison ships.

These things we know, and it is not difficult to infer the rest. It was a time of deeds, not words, and men worshipped with swords and muskets and made glad sacrifice for liberty. "Father" Gillett assures us that Branford did her part well, and that the church furnished its full quota of money and of men—and we believe his words. There can be no honor roll, bearing visible names and deeds, placed on the walls of Branford church, in memory of these times, but we gladly do homage in our hearts.

The sons of Philemon Robbins bore their part in the Revolution and served in the army as chaplains, as surgeon, and with arms in hand. Mr. Robbins himself did not enter active service. His health was failing, and he was subject to long periods of illness. His sons assisted him often in the pulpit, and he relinquished a part of his salary to the Society. His first wife, Mrs. Hannah Robbins, died on Sunday, June 16, 1776, while her son,



Ammi, was preaching for his father. Two years later (October 21, 1778) Robbins married Jane Mills, the widow of Reverend John Mills of Kent. One of her grandchildren was Samuel J. Mills, the leader of the little Williams College Band which began the history of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Two of the sons of Mr. Robbins followed their father into the ministry, both studying theology with the noted Dr. Bellamy, of Bethel, an intimate and much respected friend of their father. Ammi became minister of the church at Norfolk, Connecticut, and some of his descendants still hail from that town. Chandler was called to the pastorate of the old Plymouth church, home of the Pilgrims, and spent his life in service in that place. Philemon Robbins preached the ordination sermons for both his sons, and both sermons were printed. The one preached at the time of Chandler's ordination may be seen among the exhibits of Pilgrim Hall, in Plymouth.

Upon Sunday, the eleventh of August 1781, Mr. Robbins preached with unusual power and eloquence. His spirit threw off the infirmity of advancing years, and his hearers were astonished at the vigor of his language and the splendor of his vision. He closed his sermon with the words, "Glory! Glory!", and the congregation dispersed, with the spell of his fervent discourse still over their hearts. The next day, as he sat smoking before the fireplace, after dinner, he fell asleep.

His wife, unable to arouse him, called the doctor, who exclaimed at once "It is Death; and without a pang!" The grief into which the whole community was plunged is reflected in the entry made upon the church records: "August 13, 1781 This day died the Reverend pastor of this church Philemon Robbins in the 72d year of his age and 49th of his ministry. He died in an instant sitting in his chair. May the Lord sanctify this bereavement to this poor destitute flock."

So passed Mr. Robbins to his larger ministry. That he had not failed to give a faithful account of his stewardship on earth is testified to by the fact that he had added two hundred four members to the one hundred twenty-five whom he had found at the time of his ordination, and had baptized about eleven hundred people. These additions to the membership of the church were divided evenly, for the most part, thruout his ministry; the greatest number, for any one year, being twenty-eight, in 1733, and there being five years with no additions. Although his pastorate included the season of the Great Awakening, it also included many years of war and hardship, during which church life was at low ebb throughout the country.

Lacking, perhaps, in gifts of careful scholarship, and being wanting in diplomacy, at least at times; his was no studied excellence nor churchly statesmanship. But he was tolerant where others hated, broad where most were narrow, prophetic in an age of pedantry, a stalwart, great-hearted man of

God. His people loved him and delighted in the spiritual food which he ministered to them. He was faithful in preaching, scriptural tho not dogmatic. He said, at one time, that he had read, before his congregation, the entire New Testament, and the Old Testament from Job to Jeremiah XXVI—a rather large example of thoroness.

It was his lot to pass thru much tribulation, to be outlawed by his peers; yet being reviled, he reviled not again, but ran with patience the race that was set before him, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith. Of a mighty earnestness, his enthusiasm was never forgiven by his enemies, but it endeared him to his friends. Nor shall we be far amiss if we name him the "Great Heart" of the Branford church, who "fought a good fight," who "finished his course," who, by patient steadfastness, "kept the faith."

## TWO MINOR PROPHETS

Only a great man can wear the robe of a prophet and it is no wonder that the two immediate successors to the office of Philemon Robbins should not have measured up to the fullness of his stature. It was months before any effort was made to fill his place. In the spring of 1782, a Mr. Zebulun Ely, tutor of Yale College, was supplying the pulpit and, on the first Monday in March, he was requested to continue to preach for another month, with a view to settlement. He served on until August first, when he was given a call by the Society. Mr. Ely declined the call, and accepted one to Lebanon. After almost another year had elapsed, they called a Mr. Channing, but he also declined.

The Branford people then consulted with various members of the Consociation, and the latter recommended Mr. Jason Atwater for the pastorate. He was requested to preach for four Sundays as a candidate and, in November, was extended a call. The vote was far from unanimous and, when the Consociation met, on Wednesday, February 18, 1784, for the purpose of examining Mr. Atwater, it was felt that it was inexpedient to proceed at once with his ordination, and the gathering adjourned until March 10th.

On March 1st the Society renewed their vote, the record reading, "in pursuance of the advice of

ye Consociation convened in said Society on the 17th Day of Feb<sup>y</sup> last the doings of ye Consociation being read—after many objections and debates it was voted by division of the house ‘whether they were Desirous that Mr. Jason Atwater should be settled.’ ” This time the vote was somewhat more favorable, there being seventy-eight in favor of his settlement, and twenty-one against. The dislike of the minority, for Mr. Atwater, was great and continued to increase rather than abate, as weeks went by. But the Consociation followed the majority vote, and the candidate was ordained, March 10, 1784, at their adjourned meeting.

Anticipating this action, the opposing minority had, three days previously, endeavored to be excused from the payment of further church rates, but had been answered to the effect that their petition would not be granted unless they joined some other society. Now there was no other society in town, so the disaffected group proceeded to form one and, December 11, 1784, fifty-four of them notified the First Society that they had formed a new society for an Episcopal church. So began Trinity Parish.

It is probable that the separation of the old Society would have come eventually, in any case, tho it was unquestionably precipitated by the divisions over Mr. Atwater. From the beginnings of the century some of the supporters of the church had been sympathizers with the Church of England. At the time of Mr. Robbins’ troubles, an

abortive attempt to separate the parish had been made, a committee being appointed (December 1749) "on the request of Nathaniel Johnson and John Wilford, in behalf of the members or professors of the Church of England in this town, for a committee to ascertain and lay out a suitable piece of land in some of the highways in said town for them to set up and build a Church on." The movement died without fruit, but increasing numbers of the Episcopalian sympathizers became lax in their support of the Society and in church attendance. Occasionally they even held meetings of their own. On December 24th, 1750, the Society voted "Liberty to ye Professors of ye Church of England (as they call Themselves) to meet in ye meeting House on ye 25th of Instant December," and, in 1753, a like permission was accorded for "Dec<sup>r</sup> 25th which y<sup>t</sup> call Christmas." It must be remembered that our forebears avoided keeping that holy day themselves, branding it as a relic of popery. Several votes were also passed, from time to time, assigning seats in the Meeting House to these same people, even to such of them as had refused to pay their taxes. So we see that the separation had been impending for a long time.

The movement had begun with the moving into town of Church of England people, and had been nourished in this wise. As early as September 1748, Rev. Matthew Graves, of New London, and Dr. Samuel Johnson, of Stratford, had held Episcopal services in Branford. Soon an embryo

society was started and worship was conducted by regular missionaries. During the War of Independence this society had been unpopular and was suspected of Toryism. But it never entirely died out.

After the reorganization (June 2d, 1784), efforts began to be made towards a church building. The town granted a site on School House Hill, but the building was finally begun on Baldwin's Hill. The Congregationalists aided them in their endeavors and the town granted such assistance as was necessary. The new house of worship was sufficiently completed for services to be held therein by May of 1786 but was not entirely finished, and consecrated, until nearly fifty years later, or September 17, 1832. It stood to the northwest of the present building and was a very plain, barnlike structure. Rev. Ashbel Baldwin was first in charge, serving Guilford also. The relations with the Congregational people were harmonious at first, but were later disturbed, for a time, by the claim of the new Society to a portion of the lands at Indian Neck. The claim was never granted, and the matter gradually ceased to be pressed.

There is a strange irony in the fact that, soon after Atwater had been first called, and before his ordination, the Church, despite its years of contentions against that system and its outlawry, for rebellion against it, adopted the Saybrook Platform. Verily Mr. Robbins must have turned over in his grave. That the bitter experiences of the past and

the former utter condemnation of that document should be forgotten so soon seems almost beyond belief. It can be explained, however, by the fact that the "Consociation" system had lost its teeth and had gradually returned to the usages of the "Association" plan, in its actual practices. Never again would there be possible the dangers against which Robbins had so long stood in protest. So the vote really meant little save an eternal blot upon the names of those who so dishonored the memory of their late leader. A faithful few held out for years against this vote of the majority and refused to sign their names after the Saybrook Platform until, just after the accession of "Father" Gillett, they were compelled to do so or forfeit their church membership.

Jason Atwater was granted a salary of one hundred pounds, and the use of the wood "standing on the Society's Land, he to Cut and Cart the same." He had been born in Hamden, Conn., May 5, 1759, the son of Jacob and Miriam (Ives) Atwater, and had graduated from Yale College in August, 1781. Soon after coming to Branford, he married the daughter of Northford's minister—Mistress Anna Williams.

In the summer of 1792, the Society helped him to build the house on the west corner of Main and Rogers streets, tho Rogers Street was not cut thru at that time. His farm extended from Main Street backwards down to Page's Point and, so, included all of what is now the western side of Rogers



Street. The house was later sold to Mr. Tyler, then to Elizur Rogers, and is now occupied by Mr. Zacher.

During Mr. Atwater's ministry several important changes are to be noted in the arrangement of the interior of the Meeting House and in the conduct of public worship. On December 8, 1783, the hours of worship, on the Sabbath, were set at "half after Ten in the morning & a quarter after one in the afternoon." On March 26, 1785, it was voted that "the members of ye Church come forward into ye Fore Seats to partake of the Lord's Supper" and also that "confession for publick Scandal be only before ye whole Church."

The Meeting House was "new Seated," in April of 1784, and "3 of ye back seats in ye body of ye House on each side of ye brod Alley" were taken up, and pews were put in their place. A year later "all of ye Long seats (except ye first) in ye Body of ye House" were removed and replaced with four Pews on each side of ye broad Alley." "Alley," of course, means aisle.

Perhaps the most interesting development was that of the choir and the singing school. As early as January 26, 1784, it had been directed "That no Person that is not seated in the first seats in the frunt & side Galleries should set in s<sup>d</sup> seats on any Day of Publick Worship, except those that sing, in order that they may have sufficient room to set together ye better to perform that part of Worship." From this we know that the choir, at that

time, sat in the front seats of the galleries, both on the sides of the building, and facing the pulpit.

A tax was laid (1791) "for the purpose of hiring a teacher of Musick or Instructor of singing in public Worship." By January, 1792, the singing school was in full swing and liberty was granted to "ye Singing Schollers to get eight loads of wood on the Society's land for the use of ye Singing School." In 1795, a room for the school was also provided and "some few singing Books for such scholars as be destitute." Captain Gould and Simeon Coan were engaged as teachers and "were desired to use their influence to procure as many of the young Gentlemen and Ladies to engage in the school and obtain the art of Singing (which is considered an accomplishment) as may be, and also to Instruct the Scholars (especially new beginners) as far as they can with convenience to themselves."

The book which was used at this time may well have been, "Urania—A Choice Collection of Psalm Tunes, Anthems & Hymns. To which are prefixed the plainest and most Necessary rules of Psalmody. James Lyon, A.B. 1761." A number of these ancient books are still in existence in Branford, and are of great interest because of their unusual notation, script characters, and for the strange themes and words of certain of the anthems.

Mr. Atwater found some sixty members, according to his estimate, in the Branford church at the time of his ordination. During the ten years of his service, he added seventy-eight more, forty-three

within the first year of his service. Soon after 1790 he became infected with tuberculosis and was soon incapacitated by the disease. The Society declared his contract terminated, towards the close of the year 1793, during which year he had been able to do little preaching, and arranged with his wife for a settlement. Mr. Atwater succumbed rapidly to the disease, and grew steadily worse until his life ended, June 10, 1794.

The next to take his place in the line of the Branford ministers was the Reverend Lynde Huntington, a native of Norwich, Connecticut. He was the son of Oliver and Anna (Lynde) Huntington, and was a graduate of Yale. He was called by the church on July 20th, 1795, by a unanimous vote, and the call was seconded, by the Society, on August 7th. After some discussion about financial terms, these were fixed at three hundred pounds, as a settlement, ninety-five pounds yearly, for salary, and firewood. The call was accepted, and Thursday, October 22d, was set apart as a day of fasting and prayer. On this day Rev. Nicholas Street and Rev. Matthew Noyes delivered sermons, and upon the Ordination Day, the Wednesday following, Rev. Zebalun Ely came down from Lebanon to preach the Ordination Sermon.

The new minister was a man of large promise and of much talent. He was a strong Calvinist and, in his preaching, returned to the theology and exegesis of the seventeenth century. One of his

first acts was to abolish the Half Way Covenant in his church, and to demand specific and deepseated experience of personal regeneration as the only basis for church membership. This drawing fast of the lines is probably responsible for the fact that only fifty were added to the church in the nine years of his pastorate, and is certainly the explanation for there being only about one hundred baptisms during that period.

For many years the Branford people had desired to have a steeple upon their meeting house. In 1751, the Society had voted that one should be erected "if sufficient contributions be forthcoming," but nothing came of the endeavor at that time. Then came the Revolution, and the minds of men were turned to other things and their purses emptied in defence of liberty. So it was not until the new Republic had been born that the resolve to add to their meeting house one of those steeples, which were becoming characteristic of church architecture in New England, was revived.

The first mention we find of this resurrected desire is in a vote of the Society (January 13, 1797), "that this Society will sell & dispose of all the wood standing & growing or lying on the lower end of Indian Neck, as it is called, belonging to this Society for purpose of and to be solely applied to repairing the Meeting House, and in erecting a handsome and decent Steeple, in addition to said house, in convenient time." The wood was sold, as ordered, and the Meeting House was thoroly

repaired. Doubtless it had been almost entirely neglected during the years of war and the equally stringent days just beyond. The house was also painted, or whitewashed, both inside and out, and the roof was coated "with Spanish Brown laid on with Linseed oil." But the new steeple was not added until after the dawning of the new century.

Events of real importance are not many in this pastorate, but two matters, both connected with the Lord's Supper, are worth noting. It had been the custom from the beginning, in the Branford church, and in most of her sister churches, to defray the expense of the Communion Service by a special tax, or "rate" assessed against each member of the parish. This old practice was done away with December 3d, 1795, and the cost of the sacrament was henceforth met by a special offering, taken at the Communion Service. As time passed it became common for this special offering to amount to more than the cost of the service. So, in 1796, the deacons were authorized to "make distribution" of such money as should remain after defraying the expenses of the Communion table, "to such members of this ch<sup>h</sup> as they shall judge, after making suitable inquiry, to be most necessitous." This vote was reaffirmed in 1803. Both of these innovations proved popular and remain in force at the present day.

Mr. Huntington also was instrumental in the abolition of the Half Way Covenant. It will be remembered that this covenant was that measure

which had been adopted in the days of Abraham Pierson, and which permitted a "half way" membership in the church, consisting of those who desired to be church affiliated but who had never experienced personal vital regeneration. The measure was fast becoming unpopular in the New England of the close of the century, for it was felt, and rightly, that it was responsible for much of the laxity and lack of interest in religious life and thought of that time. But the Branford church had decisively reaffirmed their allegiance to the Covenant, when it had come before the members on a sort of referendum as to its continuance, in Atwater's pastorate, and there is no reason for failing to believe that it was the personal influence of the strongly Calvinistic Huntington which turned the tide against it in this town.

The closing years of Mr. Huntington's pastorate were marked by a series of efforts to purge the church of immorality and of worldliness by the exercise of her disciplinary powers. Page after page of the records is filled, at this point, with the minutes of meetings which were called to consider and try the cases of offenders against the good name of the Church of Christ. They are not especially interesting pages, and the names and offences there recorded have been long since forgotten, and may be best left in oblivion. It was not wholly their fault, neither was it that of the church, which realized too late the perils of indiscriminate admission to membership and endeavored, thus sharply,

to purge itself of impurity and dishonor. The fruits of the Half Way Covenant were to be reaped for many years, as we shall see, and some of them, alas, were unripe fruit.

But eight short years were allowed for the ministry of Mr. Huntington. His youth was marked by talent and his growing years brought signs of greater promise. But the disease which had cut down his predecessor soon claimed him also and his life was terminated by it, September 20, 1804.

It is difficult to make a fair estimate of his pastorate because it is so evidently incomplete. Some good he did; much more he tried to do. We may best characterize him as a reformer, whose fairest dream was to restore the Calvinistic sternness of thought and conduct which had so nearly vanished from the churches of his day. To that end he labored earnestly and strongly. Much of what could be done, he did, and, since his task was a hopeless one, and the past is never reproduced, once it be vanished, it may be that his end was a happier one than it might perchance have been had he lived to see the defeat which must have come with added years. At any rate it would appear to have been because he had been nominated therefor by Destiny, rather than from lack either of talent or of merit, that his part in the ministry of Christ was that of a Minor Prophet.

## THE MINISTRY OF "FATHER" GILLETT

In our review of the one hundred-sixty years of the history of the church which grew from the small beginnings made at "the place of the tidal river," in 1644, we have made mention only of men known to us by the written word alone. No man or woman lives whose eyes ever beheld the living features of Samuel Russell or of Philemon Robbins. Far otherwise is it with him of whom we now shall speak. "Father" Gillett is nearer to us than tradition, or even mere written record. Men and women still active in our church remember well the features and the personality of this minister of God. It is with temerity that we may venture to place the printed word beside their living memories. Yet the time has come when we must do for him even as did he for his predecessors in the prophetic office, in his classic "Semi-Centennial Discourse." May our portrait be as just as were his.

Timothy Phelps Gillett was born in Farmingbury (now Wolcott), Connecticut, on June 15, 1780. His father, Alexander Gillett, was then minister in that place, and was a man of learning beyond the ordinary. He had begun his education by graduating from Yale, in 1770, had continued his study of the classics, and, not satisfied with Latin and Greek alone, had commenced the study of Hebrew, in late middle life, and had pursued it so ardently that he



was able, some years later, to modestly confess to a friend that he had read thru the entire Hebrew Bible three times. Nor, with all his studiousness, was he a recluse, for he had a more than average success in his profession and his ministry was unusually blest.

From all that we can gather of the testimony of those who knew them both, Alexander Gillett and his son Timothy were shaped in the same mould of character and personality. The mother was Adah (Rogers) Gillett, the third daughter of Deacon Josiah Rogers, of Farmingbury, and inherited the Mayflower blood of Thomas Rogers, member of that famous company.

Timothy was the oldest of six children and had been set apart, from his birth, in his father's prayers, for the ministry. This consecration of his life to that profession had not, however, been revealed to him, nor was it, until his ordination day; it being his father's cherished desire that he might be moved of his own will to choose the holy office. With this end in view, he was sent to Williams College in 1800, after having been prepared therefor in his own home. It is said that Williams was selected, rather than Yale, the usual training school for Connecticut students, for financial reasons. After graduating from the College, in 1804, he taught in Cornwall for one year and then returned to Williamstown where he served first as a teacher in the Academy and, later, as a Tutor at his Alma Mater.

During the year and a half in which he held this latter office, the young man formed associations which had a profound influence over his subsequent life, and which, we may well believe, were the immediate cause for his change of profession. At that time Gordon Hall, James Richards and Samuel J. Mills (grandson, by marriage, of Philemon Robbins) were undergraduates, at the College, and were holding their missionary prayer meetings; and Mr. Gillett tells us that they frequently met in his room. In these meetings of the "Williamstown Band" the call to a larger service came to him. He did not enlist in the world conquest program which they had initiated beneath the historic Haystack, but he did give himself unreservedly to the work of Gospel ministry in the homeland, and he ever was a loyal supporter, both by word and act, of the apostolic labors of the missionary pioneers.

Timothy Gillett was no stranger to theology, even at this time, for he had not spent his youth within constant contact with the stern Edwardianism of his father without becoming rather thoroly saturated with its teachings. His after preaching bears abundant witness to this. But he now began to supplement his knowledge by further studies under the direction of President Fitch. He was an apt pupil, and was soon licensed to preach by the Litchfield North Association. This was on September 30, 1806. In the winter of 1807, he resigned his Tutorship and, that same winter, he

was invited to preach, for two Sundays, at East Haven. While keeping this engagement, his destiny became intertwined with that of the church at Branford.

After the loss of their promising young minister, Mr. Lynde Huntington, the Branford people were almost four years without a pastor. Not since the time of Samuel Mather and the "ten year famine" had they known such difficulty in filling the pulpit of their Meeting House. This time there was no dearth of candidates but there was an exceeding scarceness of anything approaching unanimity of opinion. Man after man was given a hearing, but none seemed to meet with universal approval. At last they managed to agree upon a Mr. Bennet Tyler, but Mr. Tyler failed to agree with them; so that also fell thru.

As a sort of last resort the Society instructed a committee (December 1807) to supply the pulpit with some satisfactory man, but to fix upon someone who had never preached in Branford before, that there should be the less chance for further disagreement. The committee appear to have come in touch with Mr. Gillett, at East Haven, and invited him to preach for them. Accepting, he came to Branford on the second day of January and, as he quaintly puts it, "having obtained help from God," "continued there ever since."

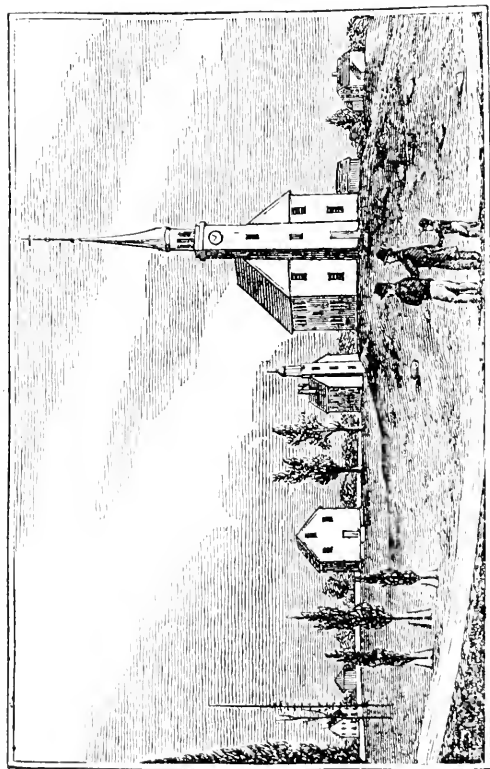
The more detailed truth is that he was not called until the following April; by the Society on the thirteenth, and by the Church on the eighteenth.

Under the terms of the call, which he accepted May 4, 1808, his yearly salary was to be five hundred dollars, with the privilege of cutting firewood on the Society's lands "sufficient to supply his own fire, until from continued ill health or infirmity he is no longer able to perform his duties."

Let us picture to ourselves, for a moment, the Branford to which Mr. Gillett came and the Branford of his early years of ministry. The town had changed somewhat since Samuel Russell's days. The population had increased until (1810) there were 1932 inhabitants in the township. The agricultural possibilities of the land had been developed and several small industries begun; among these, besides the old Iron Works, being three fulling mills, one carding machine, and two distilleries. There were also six stores, four Congregational churches (the fourth being the "enrolled" or aggrieved church, at Northford which had a feeble existence for about a quarter of a century), and two Episcopal ones.

But that commercial importance which Branford had once enjoyed had fallen away. Her ships and gallant sea-men had been decimated by the French and Indian Wars, and by our own Revolution, until she had but six vessels left, of greater burthen than forty tons. Her relative importance in the state had also lessened, not so much because of her own loss of strength as because she had failed to grow as rapidly as had certain of her neighbors. But she was a fair town, and she offered a goodly pastorate.





*Branford, (central part.)*

THE BRANFORD GREEN OF 1835

Buildings in order from left to right are the Episcopal Church, the Academy,  
the Congregational Church

The appearance of the Green is fairly well represented in the cut, which we reproduce, if we remember that the "Academy" was not built until several years after Gillett's arrival. Along the edges of the Green stood a number of "Sabbath-Day Houses." These were interesting adjuncts to the old New England Meeting House, and we are fortunate enough to have, in an extract from the "Semi-Centennial Discourse," a description of them, in "Father" Gillett's own words:

"These were little buildings put up on the skirts of the public green, and in some instances, hard by the house of God, single or double, and designed to accomodate one or more families. Sometimes a kind of patriarchate, and the whole family of two or three generations spent the intermission of the Lord's day in them. Here the provisions were deposited in the morning; in the winter season a good fire was made,—and then the Bible or some approved sermon book, produced and read; or perhaps the doctrines and principles of the morning discourse discussed. Possibly some one of less serious mood might talk with his neighbor of worldly matters, or the news of the day, but these family gatherings, in those small, unpainted, unpretending houses, were far more in accordance with the idea of remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy, than some of the gatherings of the present day, when modern progress has swept away these appendages of our earthly courts."

There can be no doubt that these Sabbath Day Houses were veritable garden spots in those puritanical old Sabbaths. The attractiveness of them grows when we remember that the Meeting House itself had no stove, and when we picture the congregation, with numbed feet and chilled faces,

hurrying forth from the frozen place of worship to find the glowing heat of the noon-day stove and meal. One suspects that there may have been more of the talk of "worldly matters" than good "Father" Gillett dreamed. And what a test of practical Christian faith it must have been to leave the place of comfort and return, with the advent of the hour of afternoon service, to the arctic church, whose refrigerated air knew no warmth save the perfervid imagery of the pictured Hell of the sermon.

The earliest notice which we find of the erection of these Sabbath-Day Houses is in an item of the Society records, of 1798, which grants permission that Deacon Baldwin "and others that are desirous of setting up a Sabbath day House or Houses may do it in the most convenient place or places & least detriment to the Public under the inspection of a com<sup>tee</sup> to be appointed by this Society."

Besides the items noted above, it may be of interest to know that the town had some two-hundred-eighty dwelling houses and two social libraries. There were five school districts in the South Society and, as "Father" Gillett puts it, "five *indifferent* schoolhouses." Only the three "Rs," and they in their most elementary forms, were taught and the instruction often occupied little more than three months in a year for most of the pupils. High schools were unknown, and even grammar schools were lacking. One of the first efforts of the young minister was to remedy this lack—but more of that anon.



It was upon the fifteenth of June, that Timothy Phelps Gillett was ordained to the ministry of Christ his Master. His father, Alexander Gillett, was present and delivered the ordination sermon. The title of it was "The Proper Mode of Preaching the Gospel," and the text, Matthew XIII; 52—"Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed into the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

It must have been a dramatic hour as, there before the flock which his son was called to shepherd, the father revealed the prayer which had been hidden in his heart since the child's birth, the desire that his son might also serve at the sacred altar, and unfolded and traced God's answer to that constant petition—thru the revival at Torrington, when Timothy had been moved by the Holy Spirit to conversion; the days at Williams and the call which reached him, thru the missionary band, for the prophetic office—and then charged him, in words solemn and earnest, to be true and loyal to his ministry. The discourse itself has been published and, even in its printed form, is afire with the emotions of that dramatic hour. An additional touch of interest was imparted by the fact that it was the young man's twenty-eighth birthday.

This year was one of the red letter ones of Timothy Gillett's calendar, for not only did it see his ordination but also, before its close (November 29th, to be precise), it witnessed his marriage to

Miss Sallie Hodges. The young couple lived, for two years, in a building on South Street (South Main Street), and were then enabled, by aid of a small legacy, which came to Mrs. Gillett, to purchase and renovate the old Parish Tavern. This served for their home thruout the remainder of the long pastorate. It stands yet, on Main Street, three houses west of the Blackstone Library

The long desired steeple had been added to the Meeting House in 1803, and the Society had voted "to purchase a Clock to be placed in the new Steeple" the year after that. Just when this clock was actually purchased and placed in position is open to conjecture, but it was probably very soon. At any rate a bell was purchased, for we know that some public-spirited person provided the funds to pay for its being rung, at twelve o'clock noon and at nine o'clock each evening except Saturday, before the year was ended.

Not until the annual meeting, in 1809, did the Society "procure sum sutable person to ring the Bell." At the next annual meeting the same provision was made and, in addition, the following directions were given as to the hours when it should be rung: "The first bell to be rung on the Sabbath morning, half after ten o'clock & in the Afternoon per quarter of an hour after One o'clock, each of the first bells, on the Sabbath, to be rung fifteen minutes (enclusive the tolling)." In 1812 the body and the steeple of the Meeting House were repainted, white, and, the same year,

the Society decided to purchase a new bell, "not to exceed eight hundred wait." The old bell was turned in towards the cost of its successor. In 1814, the sexton and bell ringer was not chosen by the Society or its committee but the position was "let out by auction."

The old custom of seating the Meeting House still prevailed, but there were variations in the method from time to time. Thus, in 1808, it was directed that it should be seated "by Age," and this practice would seem to have been followed until 1822, when the mandate given was that the seats be assigned "agreeable to dignification."

The first practice must have been a source of some embarrassment, not to say of irritation, to the feminine portion of the congregation. Can we imagine the Branford ladies of to-day graded by the number of their years in their position in the auditorium; first the nonagenarians, then the octogenarians, and so on down to the numerous "thirty years" and "sweet sixteen" groups?

But the ladies were not the only ones to be subjected to embarrassment. Imagine poor "Father" Gillett's feelings when he was informed, after a meeting in 1809, that the committee had assigned "the Pew west of the Pulpit stairs for Mr. Gillett & Mrs. Anne Huntington," who had been wife, in turn, to both of his immediate predecessors. Or, again, was it entirely diplomatic when, in 1822, he was instructed to share his pew between his wife and "Widow Anna Barker"?

If some of the customs of the fathers were retained, in these years, others were dropped. One especially obnoxious one, to our way of thinking, was done away with in August of 1810. From the first days it had been the custom, in New England, to require each person, who was a candidate for full membership in the church, to come forward, before the whole congregation, on some Sunday previous to his admission, and to publicly confess, in detail, all of the particularly scandalous sins of his previous life, especially the *hidden* ones. What a source of constant sensationalism this custom must have proved.

Of course the result was, especially in the more easy going days which followed the early Calvinistic rigor, that this rule was either not fully enforced, or else that the candidates dishonestly professed to have bared their souls to public gaze without really doing so. The only really surprising thing is that the custom lived on, in some churches, for so many years. But its end came, in Branford, with the passage, on the above date, of a unanimous vote "to discontinue the practice of requiring of candidates for admission to church privileges confessions for particular scandalous sins committed previous to their becoming hopefully converted."

We must not think, however, that, with the abolition of the rule requiring its detailed confession, scandal had died out of the Branford church. On the contrary, these next thirty years were dark ones

from the standpoint of morality. In the same year that the vote to do away with public confession was passed, the following vote was engrossed upon the church records: "January 4, 1810. Voted to choose a committee of inspection and information, who upon hearing anything of any of the members which is apprehended to be matter of public scandal and church censure are to consider themselves as under obligations to make enquiry, examine evidence and proceed with such offenders according to the law of Christ's kingdom."

Under this vote the committee set to work and began a series of church trials which fill many weary pages of the records. No pause, for anything except the minutes of these trials and such purely routine affairs as the entry of names of delegates to councils and other meetings, occurs until 1826, and then it is only that this record may be inserted, "Voted, that the state of this church is such as imperiously to require discipline," and to add the names of a new, and larger, committee. Then, for ten more years, follow the charges and actions thereon whereby the church sought to purge herself of sin, only to end up with another vote that a standing committee, of four, should "summon erring members for trial."

It is a disheartening story, this long conflict against hidden, inner iniquity, and the offences are not trivial ones but include such wrongs as "drunkenness," "theft," "lasciviousness" and "adultery." But the story is not entirely a dark one.

Anyone who cares to spend a dreary hour or two in wading thru these pages cannot but be impressed with the patience and the forbearance which the church exercised towards these offenders. Every chance which could be offered them to confess and to repent was freely extended. The passing of the final judgment was postponed, again and again, until, in one case, the offender died of old age, still unsentenced; and only rarely was the extreme judgment of excommunication rendered.

Not one vote, do we feel, was passed in anger, and often the erring member was brought to repentance and good standing was restored. The immorality and scandal we deplore, but, after all, they were only what was to be expected from the Half Way Covenant, under whose loose conception of membership most of these guilty ones had been received; but we cannot help possessing a certain great pride that the purgative process was everywhere characterized by the patient kindliness of the law of Christ.

Surely the wise counsel and firm hand of "Father" Gillett is clearly revealed by these records. Blessed is the church which, in the days of stress and cleansing, has the gift of such a pastor. Many another congregation was forever divided with hatred and schism in these same hard years, and we gladly ascribe to this shepherd's sanity and calm, forbearing judgment the praise for preserving his people in unity and concord.

As "Father" Gillett served his church with true

statesmanship, so did he serve his town. We have already seen that the school system which he found in Branford was lamentably inadequate. The new minister strove to remedy this misfortune in every way he might. From the days of the second war with Britain, he taught a "select school" in his own house—the equivalent of the grammar school of our day. In the year 1820, he gathered a number of the leading townsfolk together, and the result was the organization of an Academy. The next step was the erection of a building and, almost entirely by his efforts and largely by his own money, the little white building which has stood ever since upon the Green (tho its location has been changed slightly) was built. There he continued to teach for nearly twenty years, charging the nominal fee of two dollars a term, per pupil, for his services, and providing the firewood himself.

Early in this pastorate two interesting innovations were introduced into the Branford church. In the spring of 1817, the question arose, at a special meeting of the Society which had been called to act upon the matter of whitewashing the inside of the Meeting House, as to whether the Society would allow a *stove* to be purchased for the Meeting House. The matter was felt to be far too important for immediate action, so the meeting was adjourned to the following Monday, at which time there was an unusually large attendance and the proposal to install the stove was "Voted in the negative. Every person present was in the vote." This

strange reluctance to making their place of worship comfortable endured for several years but, in 1824, the opposition fell away to a minority, and the stove was purchased.

The other innovation created far less stir but was rather more important. Some time in this general period, we do not know when, a Sabbath School was organized in the Old Society. "Father" Gillett may have sponsored it as a part of his educational program. At any rate he taught a weekly Bible Class, and read carefully, himself, each one of the little volumes which was added to the library that soon became an adjunct to the school, before he would allow it to be placed upon the shelves. Aside from these meagre facts, we have no knowledge of our Sunday School and its beginnings, nor any further reference to it for many years.

Mention should next be made of several improvements in the church building. In 1831, people found it necessary to purchase a new bell and the old one was again sold, the remainder of the money being raised by subscription. In 1834, a number of the pews in the gallery were replaced with slips, and two years later subscriptions were being raised for an organ. It is doubtful if the organ was ever purchased, for we have no knowledge of there ever having been one in the old church.

Up to this date, the affairs of religion in the township had been divided between the Congregationalists and the Episcopalians. This was no longer to be true. In 1836, a Methodist minister,



by the name of Chesboro, endeavored to hold meetings in the Academy, but had little success and soon went away. This abortive attempt was soon followed by a more successful one. A Baptist minister, at the suggestion of a lady in Wallingford, began holding small meetings here, in 1836. Early in the following spring the work was taken up by Rev. Mr. Watrous. Much interest was shown, also much opposition, the missionary being often very badly treated. In December of 1837, Rev. Davis Shailer began holding regular services in the Academy and soon gathered a good sized group about him. But in the spring the Academy was rented as a dancing school, so the Baptists began meeting in a private house. Soon a number of people were baptized, at the Indian Neck Bridge, much to the interest of the townsfolk, and a church was organized on December 19, 1838. Two years later the present Baptist church was erected on Whipping-post Hill, which had been leveled for that purpose, and was dedicated on July 11, 1840.

This new building of the Baptists may well have made the Congregational people dissatisfied with their own edifice. At any rate, when Mr. Gillett appeared before the Society (September 11, 1840) and recommended that a new Meeting House be erected, there was little opposition. After some discussion, it was decided "to appoint an agent to go through the Society, with a subscription paper in two forms Viz. One—to solicit for to build in

the name of the Society, and to be owned by the Society &—the other, to solicit in behalf of & to be owned by Stock-holders.” The plan was; first, to obtain as much money as possible in unconditional gifts and, second, to secure pledges for shares of Stock—the par value being twenty-five dollars—which shares should be paid for in three payments. These shares would entitle the holder to be credited with pew rental, as being paid, up to the amount of their value. The subscriptions came in slowly and so the Share-holders voluntarily converted their shares into straight gifts.

It was decided to have a brick house, with a porch and large fluted pillars in front, a steeple in the center, and with two aisles in the audience room. The work went steadily, tho not rapidly, forward. The old Meeting House was in the way of the builders, so it was torn down and services were held, for a time, in the Academy. In January of 1844 the slips, which had been placed in the new building instead of the old square pews, were appraised and rented. It was also decided to have an organ in the church. The basement was not finished until January 1, 1845, for it had been necessary to sell part of the Indian Neck timber to obtain sufficient funds.

On January 19, 1845, the new Meeting House was finally dedicated, the sermon being preached by “Father” Gillett from the 8th and 9th verses of the 96th Psalm. The building had cost about nine thousand dollars, nearly eight of which had been raised by subscription.

While these things had been going on in Branford, Mr. Gillett had also been achieving a position of considerable influence among the ministers of the state. He was too conservative a man, too closely bound to the bygone years, to be a leader in the progress of denominational affairs, but these same qualities made him respected and added a certain weight to his seldom given counsels. When, in June 1838, the General Association of Connecticut, meeting at Norwalk, decided to publish a digest of Congregational principles and customs, Mr. Gillett, with David D. Field and Leonard Bacon, were the committee to whom was given the task. To the little volume, which the committee later prepared, Timothy Gillett contributed 279 of its 351 pages, preparing an account of the degree in which the ecclesiastical usages of that day conformed to the principles of the Saybrook Platform. The little book has been preserved (a copy will be found in the Branford Library) and is entitled, "The Ancient Platforms of the Congregational Churches of New England." It was printed at Hartford, 1842-45. "Father" Gillett was also one of the group of Connecticut ministers who founded the theological college at East Windsor which later became Hartford Seminary. Thus, for a second time, did a Branford pastor become one of the sponsors for "a college in this Colony."

There is little to record of the decade which followed the dedication of the new church. The new organ was not installed until December, 1849, at which time a Mrs. Lyon was engaged to play upon

it, for the magnificent sum of fifty dollars per year, "to aid the choir of singers in performing their part of divine worship." In 1851, the outside of the new building was painted. But, for the most part, little beyond the routine events of placid parish life happened. The church was blest with progress but without significant events.

When June of 1858 arrived, it was planned to celebrate the close of fifty years of "Father" Gillett's service by a suitable meeting of commemoration, to be held on the anniversary of his ordination. But illness of the aged pastor caused the plan to be changed, and the Semi-Centennial Service was held on July 7. Upon that date friends and former parishioners gathered from far and near and "Father" Gillett reviewed the history of his pastorate, and of the church itself, in a discourse which has become a Branford classic. So highly was this discourse esteemed, at the time, that upon July 20th, the Society, after passing a set of resolutions expressing their admiration and esteem for the author, ordered one thousand copies printed, each with a steel engraving of Mr. Gillett, which were to be distributed, one to each member of the church and to each family in the parish. That this was never done will be always a matter of regret. The address was later printed, thru the generosity of two gentlemen of the parish, tho on a smaller scale.

Upon the same day that the above vote was taken, the Society received the following communication from Mr. Gillett:

"To the Congregational Church & Society in Branford ;

Having recently completed the 50th year of my ministry among you, & understanding that you have a Society's meeting on Tuesday the 20th instant, I take this opportunity to submit to the Church & Society at the time of said meeting the question—whether I shall relinquish wholly or in part, the active duties of the Pastoral office among you. And I hereby request an expression of your wishes on the subject.

(Signed) T. P. Gillett."

The Society, by a nearly unanimous vote, expressed a desire that he should relinquish the active pastorate.

But now followed a lamentable quarrel about the terms of the relinquishment. The Society wished it to be total, and claimed to be under no financial obligation for the further continuance of a salary. Mr. Gillett wished to be free to perform such pastoral offices as he might please, and to fill the pulpit from time to time. He also claimed that he should, rightly, be allowed half, at least, of his previous salary. Into the details of that disagreement and of the sharp and lengthy correspondence which grew out of it, we shall not enter. Suffice it to say that the spirit on both sides was soon an embittered one, and that the final settlement brought no real satisfaction to either party. It was agreed (July 23, 1859) that Mr. Gillett should receive his regular salary of \$500 for the year ending June 15, 1860, and that he should have the privilege of cutting wood on the Society lands and the free use of his slip in the church so long as he remained a citizen of Branford. In return he was to free the

Society from all further claim for financial reimbursement, and was to cease his active pastoral service on August 1, 1859. So the matter ended, but it will always remain as an unhappy page in the history of our church that so fair and long a pastoral relation should have come to so inglorious a close.

The spring of 1859 had seen two actions of import on the part of the church. In March it was voted to print five hundred copies of a new Church Manual, which was prepared by Mr. Gillett. On April 29th it was voted to have a church clerk and also a church treasurer. Hitherto what church records had been kept had been kept by the pastor. William Linsley was chosen for the former, and Charles Rogers for the latter office.

"Father" Gillett continued to reside in Branford and to serve his people, in their homes, helpfully if informally. Time softened the rancor of the past difficulty and, on March 2, 1860, the vote of July 29, 1858, in which Mr. Gillett had been requested to relinquish wholly the pastoral office, was rescinded. A new vote was passed, "that we request our aged Pastor Rev. T. P. Gillett to occupy the pulpit with the associate Pastor, Rev. Jacob G. Miller, and that he take such part in the public services of the Sanctuary as shall be mutually agreeable to both pastors.—That we should be pleased to have our aged Pastor, the Rev. T. P. Gillett, visit our families and to perform such religious services for us as we may desire." Thus

"Father" Gillett became Pastor Emeritus, and continued so until his death.

Mr. Gillett had been subject to severe attacks of illness for many years. On Wednesday, the last day of October, 1866, he was prostrated by an unusually threatening one. For several days he lingered on, either unconscious or else racked by intense agony. On Saturday evening he had a turn for the better, and led those about him in family devotions, but soon relapsed into a lethargy which developed into stupor. He continued unconscious until Monday, November fifth, when his spirit left its earthly tabernacle. So ended a pastorate of this church never likely to again be equaled in its length of ministry, the last one of lifelong service.

The funeral was held on November 7th, and Rev. W. T. Eustis, Jr., pastor of the Chapel Street Church of New Haven, preached the sermon. The bearers were students from the Theological School at East Windsor, and the interment was in Evergreen Cemetery, New Haven, the body being removed to Branford later, at the request of Mrs. Gillett. Dr. Leonard Bacon spoke, briefly, at the grave. The funeral discourse by Mr. Eustis was printed and is replete with interesting information.

We cannot better characterize the personality and later ministry of "Father" Gillett than by quoting a few of the very apt sentences from this discourse. "He emphatically belonged to a generation which has departed, and of whom he was

almost a solitary, as he was a fitting representative. Father Gillett . . . was not merely associated with the past by his venerable age, but he was a living witness of former days, through his keen observation and accurate statements, while he was himself a goodly specimen of the manners and virtues of the preceding generation." He was "conservative in his whole moral and intellectual framework," a Calvinist of the Calvinists, yet he often allowed men of markedly liberal views in his pulpit. "His sermons were distinguished for their clear statements, their evangelistic spirit, and by their earnest desire for the religious welfare of his hearers. They were delivered with slight gestures yet with a quiet force which attracted and impressed."

As a man, "he was modest, kind, self controlled and true. He seldom gave utterance to his deepest feelings, was calm under trial, and returned enmity, when it assailed him, with words of quietness." He was "reticent, but far from morose," "A gentle humor lighted his features and played in his words, when he felt perfectly at home. He often smiled, but seldom laughed." "His face was the index of his character; placid, yet resolute; kind, but restrained; a gentle eye and a firm lip; thoughtful and self controlled, denoting a man of courtesy, who never suffered himself to be shaken by passion. He was more than he seemed." "He was scrupulously exact in attending to every service which was appointed, either in public or





REV. TIMOTHY PHELPS GILLETT

Pastor 1808-1866



private, and never failed in fulfilling the task assigned."

When we add to this estimate the fact that he was frugal, without being penurious, and that, on a salary of five hundred dollars a year and the proceeds of his teaching, he accumulated, without speculation, an estate of nearly eighty thousand dollars, we have a rather accurate portrait of the man.

The ministry of "Father" Gillett was not spectacular, and will not measure up in dramatic incidents to that of his predecessors. But, as a quiet, unobtrusive, yet cumulatively fruitful record of service, it incomparably surpasses theirs, nor is it likely to be equaled. His theology and temperament alike made him an autocrat and, during his pastorate, the Branford church knew often the hand of a master; but his was a paternal, even if a stern, despotism, and it was upheld by a sterling character and capable intellect rather than by mere external tradition.

He was the last of those old New England pastors whose word was a law in the community and whose voice bore the authority of God. Never again will a Branford minister have such prerogatives, but we have no regret that they belonged to "Father" Gillett. His pastorate was an epoch in the annals of Branford church and the fruit of his great ministry still abounds.

## JACOB G. MILLER—AN INTERLUDE

After the relinquishment of the active pastorate, by "Father" Gillett, the church and Society united in calling Rev. Jacob G. Miller, as Associate Pastor. Mr. Miller accepted the invitation, and his salary was fixed at one thousand dollars, just double the amount received by Mr. Gillett. His pastorate is an uneventful one, and but two matters need require our attention. On December 4, 1860, the time of the Communion Service was changed from the close of morning worship to a separate hour in the afternoon. On the same date it was voted, for the first time, to observe the "Week of Prayer" (during the second week in January), in company with other churches.

On September 3, 1864, Mr. Miller resigned his charge in order to accept a call to the Presbyterian church of Montrose, Pa., and his resignation was accepted. From Montrose he went to Alden, Iowa, and thence to Manchester, in the same state. He then retired from the ministry and resided for a number of years in Cedar Falls, later removing to New York state where he died, a few years ago, at the home of his daughter, at the advanced age of ninety years.

Mr. Miller was a man of large frame, with a dark complexion and a Hebraic countenance, the nose being more than usually prominent. He was a voracious reader and possessed a retentive mem-

ory. His speech was exceedingly rapid. Fond of horses, he did much of his parish work on horseback and was a familiar figure upon the highways of the town. He was not a spiritually minded man and must have been a marked contrast to "Father" Gillett. Inordinately fond of food, he was heard, in later years, to remark that he had always a tender recollection of Branford, "especially of its clams and oysters." His ministry was a useful one, but it was far from being conspicuous, and we may leave it without further words.

## A VARIETY OF LEADERS

### I. ELIJAH C. BALDWIN

The next in succession to the Branford pulpit was Rev. Elijah C. Baldwin, who was called to the pastorate of this church on January 9, 1865, the salary offered being twelve hundred dollars.

Mr. Baldwin was a native of Connecticut, having been born in Milford, December 4, 1832, his parents being Elijah and Catherine (Gunn) Baldwin. He was educated in the Milford schools and at Union Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1860. His first pastorate was at Bethel, Connecticut, where he was also ordained, September 5, 1860. On May 1st, 1856, he had married Juliet Childs, of East Hartford, who bore him one child, and who died February 23, 1857. Before his call to Branford he married again, the second wife being Frances Marsh Hutchinson, of Cromwell, Connecticut. By her he had four children. She also survived him.

Mr. Baldwin was installed, by a council which met on April 5th, 1865, "Father" Gillett making the installation prayer and Rev. W. T. Eustis preaching the sermon. The young minister took up his residence in the North Main Street house, which the Society soon purchased for a parsonage. This house is on the right hand side of the street, half way down the hill.

It was towards the close of the second year of

Mr. Baldwin's pastorate that the Society gave the famous ninety-nine year lease of its Indian Neck lands to John A. Leggat and others. Under the terms of the lease the Society was to receive nine hundred dollars a year, as rent, payable the first day of every March. In case of non-payment, unusually liberal provision was made for the protection of the leasing party. Provision was inserted that no intoxicating liquors should ever be sold upon the premises. It was agreed also that those taking the lease should have the privilege of subleasing and improvement.

Like most long term leases this one has been a source of some regret to the later generation. The rental price was probably a fair one, at the time of the drawing up of the terms, but the Indian Neck lands have grown greatly in value, since that day, and are now such desirable shore property that there is no question but what the terms have become exceedingly unfavorable for the church and Society.

Elijah C. Baldwin proved to be a popular preacher in these first years of his pastorate. He was a well read man and his sermons, which he always read, were of a "literary" character and were marked by frequent quotations.

Contrary to what one might expect from these facts, Mr. Baldwin aspired to be a reformer. He saw much evil about him and he felt called upon to correct it. Especially did he set his face against the saloons, and not without need, for there were

only forty-two places in town, at that time, where liquor was sold. The parsonage was directly across from one of these "rum holes" and it needed no super-intellect to discern the terrible fruits of its influence upon the community, especially upon the young men.

So the minister's sermons were not over tame, despite their bookish idiom, and people came out in large numbers, and enjoyed his invectives—for a while. The consequence was that the auditorium became too small for the congregation and plans were made for enlarging it.

After some little discussion, and the revision of the plans several times, it was decided to enlarge the church by removing the original façade and adding to the length of the roof sufficiently to enable the placing of thirty more pews, and replacing the old façade with a new one. This was accordingly done, and the result is the edifice in its present form. The addition at the rear of the building, comprising the chancel, was also made at this time and the walls of the auditorium were frescoed.

In June 1868 the committee in charge reported the cost of the alterations to be, approximately, \$18,500. From November to July while the alterations were being made the church services were held in the basement. In May, of 1868, it was voted, by the church, to sell some of the old Communion goblets and to purchase new ones. To these were added new plates, given by Mrs. Butler,





PRESENT EDIFICE

Erected 1843, remodelled 1868



and some new tankards, which Mr. N. P. Minor had provided, so the entire service was new.

When the redecoration of the auditorium was completed it became apparent that the organ was not adequate for the enlarged room. Funds were accordingly solicited for a better one and over \$2,000 was raised, about two thirds coming from non-residents who had been born in Branford. The new instrument was made by the Hooks, of Boston, and has served the church faithfully, lo, these many years. The reconstructed building was rededicated on Sunday, July 5th, 1868, Mr. Baldwin preaching the sermon, and Mr. Havens, of East Haven, offering the prayer.

These improvements in the auditorium were accompanied by and followed with other additions to the church equipment. New Sunday School hymnals were purchased and the church itself was furnished with "Songs for the Sanctuary." Pew cushions, a carpet, lamps and new pulpit furniture were provided for the new audience room. Downstairs a new room was fitted up, for the primary class, as was also a ladies' room, and a furnace was provided for the lecture room. A cabinet organ was added to the equipment of the Sunday School and the Library was considerably enlarged. The Society recognized Mr. Baldwin's contribution to these improvements by adding (in 1869) three hundred dollars to his salary.

In the winter and spring of 1874 there was a considerable revival in the town, the pastor being

assisted, during the month of May, by an evangelist named Underwood. About sixty persons are said to have been converted. There were also several other occasions, during Mr. Baldwin's stay, when the interest in religious matters was larger than usual but none of these times of quickening added largely to the membership of the church.

In January 1874 the Branford church was represented at the birth of her youngest daughter, "The Church of Christ in Stony Creek." Back in the days of his pastorate "Father" Gillett held services in the little red school house, at the end of the town, once or twice a year. In 1863, or thereabouts, Deacon Giles Baldwin of Bushes' Neck began a mission Sunday School, at Stony Creek, which met for a few weeks of every summer.

The next step was taken by the Rev. Mr. Simons, of the Branford Baptist Church, who held special services there in 1863. The year following Mr. Baldwin began occasional, and then monthly, meetings and, in the fall of that year, a "Religious Society" was organized, having a membership of thirteen persons, who represented four denominations. This society secured the money with which to build a little chapel, which was dedicated in July of 1866, Mr. Baldwin delivering the dedication sermon, Mr. Gillett offering the prayer, and Mr. Simons, of the Baptist church, reading the dedicatory sentences.

During the eight years which followed quite regular services were held which were usually

conducted by the ministers of Branford, North Branford and Guilford. In April 1874 Mr. E. E. Hill, of Fair Haven, began to hold regular morning and evening services in the chapel, and continued to do so until he was disabled in a railroad accident four months later. Mr. Louis Berry, then of the Yale Divinity school, was instrumental in organizing the little church. There were thirty-three charter members, eleven uniting on confession of faith and the remainder bringing letters from Branford and elsewhere. The small beginning which they made has been prospered and the church has been of much value to the town and Kingdom. The present beautiful chapel was built in 1902.

The passing years had made for Elijah C. Baldwin not a few enemies and had alienated from him some firm friends. His efforts towards reformation, which at first had been warmly seconded and had brought to him popularity, began to arouse criticism and then hostility. Moreover the reconstruction of the Meeting House had not been well financed and had left the Society saddled with a heavy debt.

All of this was unfortunate but might, by exercise of good statesmanship, not have proven serious. But Mr. Baldwin was neither a statesman nor a diplomat. He was just a good man with a great zeal for the Kingdom of God and an indiscriminating hatred of evil in all places. He had a somewhat tactless tongue and used it in a way

which stung, tho it was intended to cure. Soon his crowded audiences fell away and it became evident that his ministrations were not building up the Church Visible.

On November 10, 1873, the Society appointed Deacons John Plant, Austin Babcock and William Linsley a committee to confer with Mr. Baldwin concerning the matter of finances and other differences. At an adjourned meeting (November 25) this committee reported. Their report is not a matter of record, but it resulted, after much discussion, in instructions to the committee to consult informally with members of the church and the Society, and to endeavor to embody the prevailing sentiment in a recommendation as to further action. The committee obeyed and reported again on December 30th. Another long debate was held and it was then decided to request a committee to report the sense of the meeting to Mr. Baldwin, in the hope that this might lead to such steps, on his part, as would render further action unnecessary.

But no such steps were taken, and the affair was allowed to drift along until April 10, 1877, when a special meeting of the Society was called, on petition of several members, and Mr. Baldwin was requested to resign, his resignation to take effect by July first. The only result was a proposition, made by the pastor to the church, on August 10th, that he relinquish the pastorate at the end of the year 1877, and that the church then

unite with him in calling a council for his dismission. The church acquiesced in the proposal. On December 31st, after an attempt to have the matter reconsidered, which was defeated by a three-fourths majority, Mr. Baldwin announced that he considered his pastorate terminated and was ready to join in the calling of a council. The Society granted him the use of the parsonage for the first six months of the new year. When the church prepared, however, to summon a dismissing council, Mr. Baldwin withheld his coöperation, and the council could not be called.

The next step was an appeal, by the church, to the Consociation, at its annual meeting in May, which was met by strong objections, from Mr. Baldwin, against any immediate consideration of the matter. He was persuaded, however, after much urging, to meet the church in a Consociation session to be held at Branford on October 15th, at which meeting the Consociation unanimously declared the pastoral relation dissolved.

Leaving Branford, Elijah C. Baldwin took up his residence in New Haven and remained there until 1882. While there he edited two volumes of "The Home World," a magazine of his own origination. He wrote for this magazine and for the New Haven Colony Historical Society a series of papers, on the early history of Branford and upon the first pastors of the church, which were the fruit of painstaking and careful research and which are absolutely invaluable sources of knowl-

edge concerning our first century and a half of life. For these studies and their fruit he deserves the eternal gratitude of our church and they far more than offset the difficulties in which he involved the Branford congregation in the last years of his pastorate.

The New Haven residence and literary work were terminated in order that an invitation to become Acting Pastor of the church at Cheshire, Connecticut, might be accepted. This was in 1882, and Mr. Baldwin continued with the Cheshire church until his death, which came on April 27th, 1890. He was buried at Cromwell, Connecticut, on April 29, the Branford church being represented at the funeral and passing resolutions upon his death.

## II. C. W. HILL

Because of their recent experiences, the Society was chary of installing another pastor. Accordingly, when it was decided to invite Mr. C. W. Hill to fill the vacant pulpit, he was merely requested to *supply* it for one year, from April 1st, 1878. The salary was the not very generous one of one thousand dollars. Mr. Hill was a graduate of Bowdoin College and had been preaching at the Stony Creek church while studying theology at Yale Divinity School. Shortly after coming to Branford he married a Miss Macomber, a young lady from Maine, who was of much assistance to him in his work until she became an invalid, after the birth of their child.



A young man, of pleasing personality, who preached entirely without notes, the new minister soon became very popular, especially with the young people of the parish. He joined freely in their social gatherings and, being somewhat of an athlete, was a welcome participant in the sports of the young men. He did much towards bringing back the youthful contingent whom the previous ministry had alienated. In 1879 and, again, in 1880 he was invited to continue his services and, in the latter year, the church offered to unite with him in calling an ordaining council.

Mr. Hill entered enthusiastically into the continuance of the temperance crusade which had begun under his predecessor, but was more tactful and therefore more efficient. In 1880 a series of Union Temperance meetings were begun which continued monthly and which were productive of awakened and sustained interest. During the previous year it had been decided to revise the membership roll of the church and forty-four names, mostly non-residents, were dropped, leaving a total of 256 active and 17 absent members.

Upon July 9, 1880, Mr. Hill resigned in order that he might take up work among the Mormons in Utah. Reluctantly the resignation was accepted and the church joined with the young man in calling a council, which met in Branford on Wednesday, July 21st, and ordained him "for the work of an evangelist." The council ordained Mr. F. F. Jourdon that same day.

So ended a ministry which had begun auspiciously and which has insured Mr. Hill of a warm place in Branford's heart for all time. After serving in Utah for a time he went to California and from thence to the Hawaiian Islands where he was a missionary, for a number of years, at Hilo, T. H. He is still living and is pastor of two churches in La Mesa, California.

### III. REV. CYRUS P. OSBORNE

In Mr. Hill the Branford church had known the enthusiasm of youth, which has not yet had time to measure the glory of its vision and aspiration against the stern practicality of the actual everyday ministry. In Rev. Cyrus P. Osborne, her next pastor, she found one who brought to his new charge an unusual wealth and variety of experience.

Cyrus Osborne was a native of the Pine Tree State, born in Waterville in the year 1834. His first training was received in that alma mater of many a successful man of his time, the fore-castle of a sailing vessel. His was the stern, soul-trying but unforgettable experience which Dana has immortalized in his "Two Years Before the Mast." Osborne's three years resulted in the placing of the stamp of the deep sea upon his life and the planting of the seed of a desire which, tho it was to lie dormant for awhile, would, in the end, spring up into an unusually fruitful ministry.

Leaving the sea, after three years, young Osborne

entered Phillips Andover, then Harvard, from which he graduated in 1859, and concluded this academic aspect of his education with three years at Andover Theological Seminary.

After a successful period of service to the church at Bristol, Rhode Island, there followed a year of travel in Europe and the Holy Land, a rare privilege in those times. On his return, the young minister was married to Miss Ella Smith, of Westfield, Massachusetts. Then came the great conflict between North and South, and Osborne responded to the call to service by joining in the work of the Christian Commission, the Y. M. C. A. of that day, and rendered a good account of himself with the Union Army.

One might think that the years of training would be now completed, but young Osborne did not think so for he followed up his wartime ministry with only one year of active pastoral service, in Baltimore, Maryland, and then returned to Andover Seminary for two years more of graduate study. At the conclusion of this final schooling he accepted a call to Simsbury, Connecticut, where he was ordained and ministered four years.

The call to the church in Branford came to him on October 29th, 1880. It was accepted, with the proviso that the clause in it which provided for the giving of three months' notice by either party as preliminary to severing the pastoral relation be changed so that but three weeks' notice should be required of the pastor. Mr. Osborne remained

one month more than four years, resigning, November 10, 1884, to go to the Presbyterian church of Fayetteville, New York, where he remained for more than a decade and a half.

But the best work of Mr. Osborne was not done in the regular pastorate nor in the early years of his life. He was sixty-five years old when the call came, in 1899, to affiliate himself with the work of the Boston Seaman's Friend Society, as Corresponding Secretary. The memory of his own boyhood experience of the perils and hardships of a sailor's life must have come to him as he entered upon his new ministry. His service in the new field was conspicuous and he remained active in the work of the Society until his death, which came at Cambridge, Massachusetts, after a brief illness, August 18, 1912. A minister with unusual wealth of training, both from books and schools and in the university of a varied life, his was a mind of remarkable breadth of view, a heart of deep and thoughtful sympathy and a spirit irenic and ever fresh. Not only is he remembered, in Branford, for the good years of his pastorate but also for the happy visits which he made, in the interest of his special work, in later years. We shall ever be grateful that we were honored with his friendship.

It was during this pastorate that the old parsonage on North Main Street was sold and the minister lived at Branford Point. The North Main Street residence had become objectionable because of the saloon which stood directly oppo-

site. Efforts were initiated at once to build another house but difficulty was encountered in fixing upon an expedient site and the matter remained in abeyance until some time after the conclusion of Mr. Osborne's ministry.

The work of the church itself was not eventful in these years. Several minor changes were made but very little is reported in the records. On December 31, 1880, the members of the church committee were made ineligible for reelection until after the expiration of one year from the conclusion of their term of office. Some time during the following year, the small box which is fastened to the wall of the auditorium, next the door, was placed there, with a companion one next the other entrance, to receive offerings for public charities. A new church manual was begun, but was not issued until after the coming of Mr. Bake. Upon the last day of 1881 it was decided to henceforth use only unfermented wine for the Communion table. These, and the death of Deacon John Plant, a faithful and efficient servant of the church, in 1881, are the outstanding occurrences of the pastorate. It was a period of prosperity, but of no conspicuous events.

#### IV. REV. HENRY PEARSON BAKE

After the church and Society had offered the pastorate to Rev. C. S. Beardsley and had been unsuccessful in obtaining his services, a call was extended, November 9, 1885, to Henry Pearson Bake of Ticonderoga, New York, to serve as

minister for one year from August 30, 1885, when he had come to Branford. The salary was to be \$1,300, and the Society provided the Margaret Hopson house, which was situated upon Hopson Avenue, just north of the present home of the Swedish Lutheran Church, as a residence for the minister. Mr. Bake is of English stock, born in Yorkshire, and claims lineage from Abraham Pier-son, Branford's first settled minister.

The pastorate is principally of interest because it contributed two important organizations to the Branford parish. The first of these was the Comfortable Society, which was formed, about 1886, with the particular mission of reducing the church debt which remained as a heritage from the time of the reconstruction of the building. The society took its name from the fact that, when it sought for a means to earn money, the task which came first to hand was the making of "comfortables." It was made up of the younger ladies of the church, and was highly successful in its purpose and contributed several hundred dollars towards the reduction of the heavy load which was being carried by the Society. Nor did it cease with the accomplishment of its task, for it has flourished ever since and has ministered, upon unnumbered occasions, to the improvement of the church plant.

The other organization, to be born in this period, was the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. The society was inspired by Mr. Bake, and is one of the oldest societies of the Christian

Endeavor movement. It met in the church basement and was a source of great strength to the church life. It has continued, with unbroken existence, to our own day, and is still active and influential in the affairs of the parish.

About 1886, the Tabor Lutheran Church was beginning its career and the Congregational church, in the spirit of neighborliness, extended to the young congregation the use of the vestry, upon Sunday afternoons, for the holding of their services. The kindly feeling of that day has continued as the new church has grown in numbers and in strength.

In 1886, the church building was repainted and in 1887, new lamps were provided for the entrances. About this same time, the Society, coöperating with the owners of adjacent real estate, put thru the road which is now Wilford Avenue, and also that portion of Church Street which lies between Wilford Avenue and South Main Street. The property along the eastern side of Church Street had been acquired by the Society in 1885, and was now divided up into house lots, which were sold, with the exception of the corner lot, Church and South Main Streets, which was reserved for the site of a parsonage.

Upon May 2d, 1887, the Society received a communication from Mrs. Sally Gillett, the widow of Timothy Phelps Gillett, offering a gift of two thousand dollars, contingent upon the removal of her husband's body from New Haven, by the Society,

and its reinterment in the Branford Cemetery, the grave to be marked by a suitable monument; it also being provided that Mrs. Gillett should be buried, eventually, beside her husband. The gift was accepted and the body of Mr. Gillett was given a fitting resting place, close to the church he had loved. Mrs. Gillett died soon after and was laid beside him.

As the time drew near for the close of the second century since the reorganization of the church, the Branford people decided to observe the anniversary in fitting manner. A committee of twenty, ten each of men and women, was selected and the Bi-Centennial was fittingly commemorated, March 7, 1888. The historical sermon was preached by Mr. Bake, and was an able one. It was not printed, but the original manuscript is now in the possession of Mr. Charles Blackstone.

In many respects the pastorate of Henry Pearson Bake was an unusually prosperous one for the church. Besides the events above noted there were several times of marked evangelistic effort, and the benevolences of the parish were very largely increased. In 1888 the new church manual was printed. It is unfortunate that the close of the pastorate was accompanied by enmities and disagreeable circumstances.

It is neither necessary nor wise to endeavor to detail the events which led up to the estrangement. Suffice it to say that, by early 1887, a marked antagonism had developed between a large group



and the pastor and that, when on July 28th the vote was taken as to whether Mr. Bake should be continued in the pastorate another year, it was only by the deciding vote of the chair that the invitation to stay on was extended. The next year the vote was decisively against the continuance of the pastoral relation, and Mr. Bake resigned, July 3d, after having been given notice that his services would not be required after September first. The resignation was unanimously accepted by the Society, and was accepted by the church also, after the passage of resolutions commending the work of the minister.

Upon the Sunday following the crisis, the retiring pastor preached a sermon of such vehemence and fierce invective that it has not yet been forgotten. The result was that, upon the next subsequent Sunday, the house was filled to the doors with an expectant congregation, in anticipation of another sensation. They were disappointed, however, for the sermon was a commendable example of restraint and of conquered temptation, being an eloquent presentation of the gospel of the Christ.

Mr. Bake went to New York State, from Branford, and is still living, tho he has long since retired from active work. In later years he returned to Branford, for a visit, and preached again in the old church, being warmly received. His ministry was, on the whole, a very able one, and he deserves a lasting and grateful place in our esteem.

## V. REV. THOMAS BICKFORD

After the removal of Mr. Bake, the church devoted more than a year to hunting for another minister. They found him at Orleans, on Cape Cod,—a student, and a Christian gentleman. He was called to the ministry in Branford on the sixteenth day of September, 1889. The salary was increased three hundred dollars, and he was engaged for an indefinite period, to be ended only after three months' notice.

At the beginning of that same year, the Society had borrowed four thousand dollars that they might build a new parsonage, on the old Frisbie lot, at the corner of Church and South Main streets. Aided by generous contributions from the Comfortable Society, the house was completed the next summer and Thomas Bickford became its first occupant. It was an almost ideal location for a parsonage, and the house itself was an attractive and commodious one.

The congregation rallied about the new pastor and good feeling was more universal than it had been for many years. The Branford people found in him a friend and a quiet, tactful leader. Symbolic of this united spirit was the "Collation and Roll Call" which was held on October 29, 1890. The roll call was held in the auditorium and was responded to by about two hundred persons, by word of mouth or by letter. The church then adjourned to the vestry, and three hundred gath-

ered about the generous supper tables. After the family meal there were toasts and felicitations, and an original hymn, written by the pastor, was sung. Altogether, it was a memorable evening. One item of interest connected with it is that it was in preparation for that occasion that the last of the wooden slips, which formerly filled the vestry, was removed.

A tablet, in memory of the ministry of Philemon Robbins, was offered, by Mr. Robbins Battell, of Norfolk, Connecticut, one of the descendants of the former pastor, to the Society and was gratefully accepted. The tablet was a large bronze one, and was placed on the wall at the right of the chancel. It bears the following inscription:

In Memory of

PHILEMON ROBBINS, A.M.

Born in Charlestown Mass., September 19, 1709

Graduated at Harvard College 1729

Ordained over this Church of Christ February 7, 1733

Died in office August 3d, 1781, in his 72d Year

As a Pastor greatly Beloved by His People  
Esteemed and Respected by His Clerical Brethren

Mild Peacable and a Peace Maker

Strenuous in Defence of Ministerial Liberty

Earnest in Promoting the Great Revival

A Sound and Searching Preacher

Holding Fast the Doctrines of Grace

Mr. Bickford's ministry was marked by large additions to the church roll, nearly one hundred being added during his three years of service. He also endeavored to revise the roll, eliminating errors which had crept in. It is said, tho the matter is not certain, that the Woman's Missionary Society was organized at this time.

November 25th, 1892, Mr. Bickford resigned, requesting that the three months clause be waived and that he be permitted to leave December first. The church and Society granted the necessary permission, and Mr. Bickford removed to Springfield, Vermont, the reason given being the dangerous illness of his daughter.

Branford has had few men, among her ministers, of larger personal worth than Thomas Bickford. He was born at Chelsea, Massachusetts, December 30, 1853. Graduating from Colgate, he was ordained to the Baptist ministry, at Taberg, New York, in 1876. His first Congregational pastorate was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during 1884-87. He then went to Orleans, in the same state, and, from there, came to Branford. After the death of his daughter, Ruth, in Springfield, Vermont, Mr. Bickford removed to Chicago where, for several years, he engaged in business successfully. Reëntering the ministry, he preached in Hinsdale, Illinois, and then at Stoughton, in his native state. In 1906 he founded the "Sea Pines School of Personality for Girls," at Brewster, Massachusetts, and achieved notable success, build-

ing up a school that has attained excellent reputation and is likely to be monumental. The vision which led him to its founding was one of educating the soul, as well as the mind and body, and of training young women to know and develop themselves.

It was with deep sorrow that, July 5, 1917, Branford learned that she had lost this former pastor. He died, suddenly, of heart trouble, at Worcester, Massachusetts. Mrs. Bickford and his two daughters, Faith and Addie, survive him and are perpetuating his beloved school. A man of gracious and winsome personality, of sterling character, tactful, and warmed with gracious humor, he was a true and lovable Christian gentleman and the wholesome influence of his presence will continue with us for full many a year. His character is the measure of his ministry.

## THE NEW CENTURY

The last day of May, 1893, was a momentous day for the Branford church, for it marked the beginning of a pastorate which was to endure for sixteen years, or longer than had any since the days of "Father" Gillett. It was also a day of import for the new minister, Rev. Theophilus S. Devitt, for it not only witnessed his assumption of a new charge but was also his wedding day. Mr. Devitt came here from LeRaysville, Pennsylvania, and he brought with him, as his bride, Mrs. Katherine (Buck) Devitt, of his former parish.

In preparation for the coming of their new pastor, the parsonage was painted and put in order and the church auditorium was painted and frescoed. The larger part of the funds were provided by the ladies of the Comfortable Society, tho the Ecclesiastical Society furnished some assistance. A little later the church roof was recovered, with slate instead of shingles, and new lamps were purchased for the audience room.

Mr. Devitt had first preached in Branford upon March 26th of that year and had been called to the pastorate upon Easter Sunday. The salary was fixed at \$1,200 and parsonage (it was increased to \$1,400 the following year) and he was invited to remain for an indefinite period.

The son of Rev. Frederick Devitt, a Methodist minister, and Eleanor (Cassidy) Devitt, Theophilus

Devitt had been born at Montreal, Canada, March 6, 1867. He was one of a large family, there being eight boys and two girls. Three months or so after his birth the family removed to the States and became residents of New York State. There the young lad received his early training and supplemented it with a course at Syracuse. He has also studied at Yale Divinity and at Allegheny and has received the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy and of Divinity. Before serving at LeRaysville, he had been principal of a school at Smithville Flats, New York, for several years.

The early years of the pastorate were uneventful ones, for the historian, and we shall mention only a few facts. The first should be the gift, by Mrs. Lorenzo Blackstone, to the church, of a memorial tablet, in memory of "Father" Gillett, which was accepted and placed upon the left of the chancel. Its inscription reads:

In this Church

TIMOTHY PHELPS GILLETT

Served Successive Generations  
According to the Will of God

---

The Son of a Godly Minister  
Born at Wolcott, Conn. June 15, 1780  
Graduated at Williams College 1804  
Where as Tutor he Aided the Beginnings  
Of American Foreign Missions

Ordained Pastor of this Church June 15, 1808  
Died at Branford, November 5, 1866

---

He Sleeps among the People to Whom by Word  
And Example He Showed the Way of Life  
And Who Loved Him for His Works Sake  
And for His own

---

Grateful to God and to His Servant  
A Daughter of this Ancient Church  
Has set up this Memorial

In 1895 it was voted to elect two additional deacons, and Herbert E. Thatcher and John J. V. Cuninghame were chosen to that office. In 1896 one of the Jubilee Services of the American Missionary Association was held at Branford, the neighboring churches participating, and in June of '97 came the establishment of the precedent for the elimination of the evening service during July and August.

The beginning of the new century saw a number of improvements in the church building. The choir gallery was enlarged, a new carpet purchased for the auditorium (the old one being transferred to the basement, where it did valiant service for many years), and the church was wired for electricity and new fixtures were installed. In all of these improvements the Comfortable Society had led the way and borne the major portion of the expense.



On May 20th, 1904, Mr. Edward F. Jones presented the Society with five thousand dollars, in debenture bonds of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, the fund to be known as the "Margaret A. Jones Fund," and the interest to be at the disposal of the pastor and deacons "for the comfort and support and maintenance of those who are attendants upon the services of said church, and who are poor, sick, aged, or infirm." Mr. Jones later supplemented this fund with another five thousand dollars. The gift was gratefully accepted by the Society and the church and resolutions were passed, thanking the donor. The fund has been a source of much comfort and blessing to the needy of the parish in the years which have passed since.

The years 1903 and 1905 were marked by the passing of two aged and faithful servants of the church. On March 5th, of the former year, Deacon William Linsley was called to his reward. He had been deacon for more than forty-five years, and had served the church also, as its first clerk, for more than thirty years. On May 28th, of the latter year, Austin M. Babcock entered the membership of the Church Triumphant. He had served at the Communion table for more than thirty-five summers and winters. Sadly did the church miss these two faithful servants.

Beginning in January of 1906 and continuing for several years, Dr. Devitt made much of the Week of Prayer, calling in other ministers to assist, and

asking for decisions for Christ, as the week drew near its end. These meetings were very successful, the attendance sometimes averaging two hundred and as many as seventy decisions being indicated by the cards.

One of the dramatic incidents of this pastorate came with the June of this same year, when, during a severe thunderstorm upon the last day of the month, the steeple of the church was struck by lightning. The damage was quite extensive, being reckoned at close to sixteen hundred dollars. The steeple was rather badly wrecked, and the ceiling of the auditorium was damaged, as was also the organ. For some time the tower was surrounded by staging and many people still have vivid recollections of having essayed the ascent of the steeple, to the alarm of the authorities.

A new individual Communion service was presented to the church, in the spring of 1905, by the Comfortable Society and was used in the autumn of that year for the first time. The introduction was not made without opposition, certain of the members feeling that the antiquity of the older vessels more than offset their lack of sanitary qualifications. But the new service soon gained in favor and overcame the scruples which it had first encountered.

The need became evident, at about this time, of a new parish organization which should include the younger women of the community. Accordingly, Dr. Devitt gathered some forty or more of the

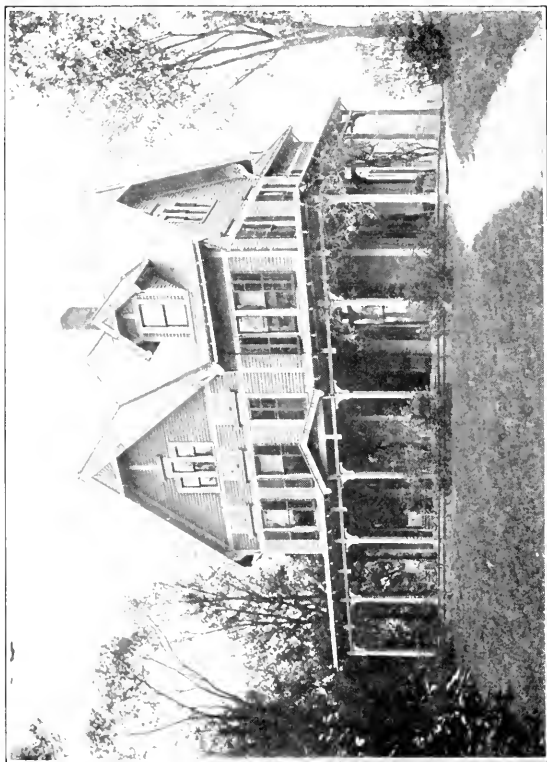
young ladies of the community in the parsonage parlors and they organized as the Social Workers, their purpose being to serve the church and to furnish a social life, felt to be wanting. How well they have since served their purpose is too well known to need further recording here.

This same year stands out as the preëminent year of Dr. Devitt's ministry in Branford. For a long time the town had been falling more and more under the dominance of the liquor interests. Dr. Devitt determined to make a stand and to engage in battle for a cleaner town. The result was a struggle to the death, which soon involved the whole community. The people of the church rallied, for the most part, to the support of their pastor and proved unselfish in their devotion to the cause. The sister churches and the other Christian forces of the town also bore their part. But it is to Dr. Devitt that the credit is unreservedly due that, on the day after the town election, the liquor interests found themselves beaten at the polls. During the six Sundays before the election was held the church had held Temperance meetings, in place of the evening service, and Dr. Devitt had given of his best, then and in personal labor during the weeks. The victory is one of which to be proud and it is most regretable for Branford that Dr. Devitt was not able to be on hand to carry on the fight the following year.

In December of this year (1908) Mr. Edward F. Jones died leaving to the Society, for use as a par-

sonage, his house and grounds, on Rogers Street, with the provision that the land should never be sold and that the house be used only for the residence of the minister. He also left one thousand dollars towards the elimination of the church debt, and the additional five thousand dollars of the "Margaret A. Jones Fund." The Society accepted these legacies and sold the former parsonage, devoting a portion of the proceeds to improving the new house. Hard wood floors were laid, electricity supplied, in part, and other changes made. The heating plant was also, later, changed from "hot air" to "hot water."

This fortune was followed by misfortune for, on August 22d, 1909, Dr. Devitt read his resignation, to take effect October 1st. He had received a call to a promising field in Winona, Minnesota. With great reluctance, after urging reconsideration, the church and Society complied with his wish and accepted the resignation, accompanying their acceptance with a set of resolutions of high commendation and appreciation. So closed his long and fruitful pastorate. Dr. Devitt served the western church nine years, and is now minister of the Central Congregational Church of Fall River, Massachusetts. Branford people remember his ministry as a period of happy, wise and tactful service and honor the man who was their leader.



THE MANSE

Presented to the Society by Hon. Edward F. Jones, 1909



## THRU TROUBLED WATERS

Of the stern and troubled times which follow, from 1910 until 1915, we shall give little more than a bare skeleton of fact. Too painful are the scars of those years to be handled yet; too near are we to the conflict to have yet attained that calmness of judgment which will enable us, righteously and fairly, to add up the cost sheet of those days and strike a balance. A future historian may venture to assess the gain and loss which came, in that period, to Branford church, but the only judgment now possible must come from the consciences of those who sincerely followed the right, as they saw it, thru distressful hours.

Upon Sunday, March 13th, 1910, Mr. Seeley K. Tompkins, who had been recommended to the church by Branford people living in the West, preached in Branford. Seven days later he was called to the pastorate. Having been previously a teacher in the Iowa State Teachers' College, Mr. Tompkins was ordained, May 16, 1910, at the First Congregational Church in Cedar Falls, Iowa, Branford being represented on the council.

Mr. Tompkins was born at Oak Park, Illinois, October 9, 1880. His father was James Tompkins and was, for twenty-six years, Superintendent of the Illinois Home Missionary Society as well as being pastor at Oak Park. The mother, Ella (Kelley) Tompkins, was of a Vermont family.

Their child was educated at the Oak Park High School; Oberlin College (1901) where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa; Yale University (1913, B.D., Magna Cum Laude, M.A.); and has received the degree of Doctor of Divinity (1917) from Miami University, Ohio. After leaving college he taught at Oberlin, Carleton College, and Iowa Teachers' College. He married Sarah Ina Gillilan, who is of Scotch descent. They have four children.

Mr. Tompkins began his work in Branford on June 26, 1910. Fresh from the Middle West, he brought to the Eastern church a wealth of new conceptions and new viewpoints. The story of his pastorate is the record of the application of these to the Branford church.

For many years the church had been using the "Songs of the Sanctuary" for a hymnal, and a new one was much needed. In January of 1911, the church adopted "Hymns of the Kingdom of God." The month previously they had adopted the Apportionment Plan for their benevolences. October 1910, the weekly printed Calendar came into use. In September of 1910, the church had changed the hour of their evening service from seven to seven-thirty. In January they held union meetings with the Baptists, and, in November of 1911, Mr. Tompkins endeavored to bring about monthly union services of all the Protestant denominations, but with only partial success. That same year saw the first of the special meetings during



Holy Week, which have continued to be held in after years.

Upon the church calendar of Sunday, December 9, 1911, Mr. Tompkins proposed a list of three changes, which he felt should be adopted. The first was the putting of the hour for morning worship ahead to ten-thirty o'clock. The second was the transfer of the midweek meeting from Friday to Thursday, or Tuesday night, in order that Friday be left clear for the use of the high school students. The third, and most radical, was the election of an additional deacon and the abolition of the lifelong term of office in favor of a five year period of service.

At the annual meeting of the church, on December 29th, these matters came up for vote. The first recommendation, and the second, were adopted; the hour for morning service being changed from 10.45 to 10.30 A. M., and the midweek service transferred to Tuesday night. But, when the proposal concerning the diaconate came to vote, the pastor's proposition was defeated, by a vote of 46 yeas to 54 noes. Mr. Tompkins thereupon offered his resignation, which was refused acceptance, by a margin of six votes.

At the previous annual meeting (1910) a committee had been appointed to revise the church manual. Acting upon the stimulus of that committee and moved thereto by objection to its use, on the part of certain candidates for church membership, the church, by a majority of one-third,

voted, in June 1912, to change the form for the reception of members to a new one which did not include the "Apostles Creed." Two years later the "Kansas City Creed" was adopted.

At the annual meeting of December 1912, the matter of the change in the deacons' term of office again arose. After hot debate it was voted that such present deacons as were willing to resign should do so, and Deacon Thatcher resigned. Another deacon was dropped, on charges, from office and membership. Mr. Thatcher was reëlected, for five years. On February 4th, 1913, Mr. L. M. Barker was chosen to the diaconate, for three years. At the annual meeting of 1913, Deacon Charles Cooke resigned, and Mr. Joseph Lee was chosen for a five year term.

In 1913, the card index system was adopted for the listing of church members and Mr. Tompkins' salary was increased to eighteen hundred dollars. The next year a new set of standing rules became the law of the church. To these years also belongs the organization and continuance of a successful Men's Club.

So ends the bare record of these years and of the innovations made in the church life. That many of them were of great wisdom and much needed, and that they added greatly to the efficiency of the parish work, is beyond question. That they cost a fearful price, not only in a depleted membership and in alienated families but also in the agony of human souls is, unfortunately, no less true.

The true meaning and interpretation of those years must be left to the individual conscience, to the future generations—and to God.

Mr. Tompkins resigned his charge on February 14, 1915, to accept a call to the Walnut Hills Congregational Church of Cincinnati, Ohio, where he has remained since. Branford remembers him as one who did his duty as he saw it, without counting the cost.

## WAR RECORDS; THERE AND HERE

We come, now, truly, to the present generation and to our own time. The clouds of the great war were enveloping Europe and were fast shutting in over our own land when, April 15, 1915, Rev. Theodore Burger Lathrop was called from the Chaplaincy of Atlanta University, to Branford, Connecticut. The story of his pastorate, up to the present time, is largely a "war record."

Mr. Lathrop was born in Macon, Georgia, November 19, 1881, his father and grandfather having been Congregational ministers. His father is Rev. Stanley E. Lathrop and his mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Littell. She came from the Scotch clan MacLean. It is not surprising that Mr. Lathrop felt he must bear his part in the Great War, for his mother's father and his eight sons fought at Waterloo, while one of his ancestors was a captain in the American Revolution, and Rev. Stanley Lathrop was in the Civil War, and two of Theodore Lathrop's uncles lost their lives in the same conflict.

Mr. Lathrop graduated from Beloit in 1903 and taught, for two years, in Ward Academy, South Dakota. It was here that he met Miss Blanche Mullen, who was teaching music there, after her graduation from Yankton Conservatory, and persuaded her to become Mrs. Lathrop. From 1905 to 1908 he was at Yale Divinity, where he was



REV. THEODORE BURGER LATHROP

Pastor May 30, 1915  
Installed June 21, 1916



active in university affairs. He served the church at Plymouth, Connecticut for two years, receiving also his M.A. from Yale, and then went to the work at Atlanta.

Mr. Lathrop's pastorate has been distinguished for the large accessions which it has brought to the church roll. The largest number, at any one time, was at Easter 1916 when he received into the communion of the church forty-two persons; a record not equalled since the days of "Father" Gillett.

The present pastorate will also be long remembered by the fact that it witnessed the organization of a troop of Boy Scouts who have distinguished themselves again and again by their splendid record, especially in war time service for the Government. Several other organizations, among them the Go-To-Church Band, the Get-Together Club and the Everychild Mission Circle, have owed their existence to Mr. Lathrop's planning.

On Tuesday evening, May 21st, 1916, upon recommendation of the Board of Deacons, the church voted to install Mr. Lathrop as pastor. A council was called for June 21st and the installation service was held upon the evening of that day, Dean Charles R. Brown delivering the sermon.

A bequest of one thousand dollars came to the church on October 17th, 1916, to be known as the "Eunice Geer and Marion Geer Sheldon Fund." The legacy came from Mr. Edwards D. Sheldon, and the income is to be used for the poor and needy

of the parish. The fund is administered by the Board of Pastor and Deacons.

Since the entrance of the United States into the war, in April of 1917, Theodore Lathrop had felt increasingly the call to service. Accordingly, when the opportunity came to him to enter the overseas work of the Y. M. C. A., he grasped it gladly and requested from the church, August 26th, a leave of absence. The leave was granted, and Mr. Lathrop was soon across the seas.

The record of his service is one of which Branford is justly proud. From the time of his arrival overseas until January 1918, Mr. Lathrop was in charge of the Y. M. C. A. "Hut" of the British Base Hospital #1, at Etretat. From January until April he served in Paris, with the Library Branch of the Association, sending books and magazines to the men at the front, and in the camps. In April he had his first experience of the "front" having been made a field secretary and assigned to canteen work in the Toul sector. His final assignment was to the 3d Battalion of the 104th Infantry, with whom he remained until ordered home, because of illness. He was with this unit at the battle of Château-Thierry and did work of such excellence that he has been recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross.

While her pastor was across the seas the church was doing her best to emulate his example. The Boy Scouts sold Liberty Bonds and Thrift Stamps, served as messengers for the Government and



assisted in a multiplicity of campaigns which defies enumeration. They also gave their drum corps to escort the contingents of drafted men to the station and for patriotic parades. The Comfortable Society met weekly, for Red Cross work, while the Social Workers took up the task of making clothing for the refugee children of Belgium and France. Several of the Societies purchased Liberty Bonds and Thrift Stamps. All of this was in addition to the private contributions of time and strength which were made by practically every person of the parish. And beyond and crowning these endeavors and symbolized by the many starred Service Flag in the place of worship, shines the Honor Roll of the fifty young men and women who were with the uniformed servants of their country. Nor will we forget that that flag has now one star of gold.

It was during the interim, following the departure of the pastor, that the compiler of this little book had the honor of standing in the long and glorious succession of the Branford pastorate. He came in October of 1917 and remained until the April of 1919—a wonderful period of sacrificial service in the church by those remaining. The details of his service are too fresh to excuse recall and too few to bear much enumeration. It was a time when men were straining themselves and their resources to support the Government, and when the prevalent conception of the Gospel was one translated into deeds of patriotism. While encour-

aging and reinforcing this, it was his effort to interpret the passing epochal events and to emphasize their spiritual significance. If he succeeded at all in doing this he counts himself happy.

Probably the two events of the Acting Pastorate which will be longest remembered will be the two presentations of the Christmas Miracle Play and the formation of the Pilgrim Daughters. The Junior Church ought also to remain significant. Along other lines the work was one of reinforcement rather than of innovation.

Mr. Lathrop returned to the church in April and has resumed the pastorate. May the peace record, both for minister and church, equal their achievement in the days of strife.

So we come to the close of this survey of our heritage. The traditions of the fathers lie behind us—glorious is the sum of them. But the history of the Old Church and Society in Branford is, we trust, scarce more than begun. May the Great Head of the Church impress upon us more and more the obligations of our heritage, and “seeing that we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses” may we “cast aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Our Faith.”

## APPENDIX

### THE MINISTERS OF BRANFORD CHURCH

John Sherman .....	1644-1646-7
Abraham Pierson .....	1647-1667
John Bowers .....	1667-1672
(Eight years of Candidates)	
Samuel Mather .....	1680-1684
Samuel Russell .....	1687-1731
(Died in Office)	
Philemon Robbins .....	1733-1781
(Died in Office)	
Jason Atwater .....	1784-1794
(Died in Office)	
Lynde Huntington .....	1795-1804
(Died in Office)	
Timothy P. Gillett .....	1808-1866
(Died Pastor Emeritus)	
Jacob G. Miller .....	1859-1864
Elijah C. Baldwin .....	1865-1878
C. W. Hill .....	1878-1880
Cyrus P. Osborne .....	1880-1884
Henry Pearson Bake .....	1885-1888
Thomas Bickford .....	1889-1892
Theophilus S. Devitt .....	1893-1909
Seeley K. Tompkins .....	1910-1915
Theodore B. Lathrop .....	1915-
J. Rupert Simonds (Acting Pastor) .....	1917-1919

# THE DEACONS OF THE CHURCH

	Chosen	Removed	Retired
Lawrence Ward	.....	.....	1667
John Rose	.....	?	.....
George Baldwin	.....	?	.....
Samuel Harrington	.....	?	.....
Samuel Rose	.....	Died	.....1763
John Russell	.....June 7, 1733	Died	.....1759
(Son of Rev. Samuel Russell)			
Edward Barker	.....February 1, 1756	Died	.....1763
Nathaniel Foote	.....March 3, 1763	?	.....
Elnathan Beach	.....June 6, 1763	Died	.....1799
Stephen Smith	.....July 4, 1771	Resigned	.....1771
Daniel Maltbie	.....November 7, 1771	?	.....
Samuel Rogers	.....July 3, 1777	Died	.....1795
Zacheus Baldwin	.....December 3, 1795	Died	.....1831
Samuel Tyler	.....January 1, 1800	Died	.....1816
Samuel Frisbie	.....May 5, 1809	Died	.....1851
Eli Fowler	.....September 26, 1816	Died	.....1850
Harvey Page	.....September 5, 1851	Removed	.....
Jeremiah Russell	.....January 3, 1852	Died	.....1885

Chosen		Retired	
William Linsley	May 1, 1857	Died	1903
John Plant	1860	Died	1881
Austin Babcock	November, 1869	Died	1905
John J. V. Cuningham	February 15, 1895	Dropped	1912
Herbert E. Thatcher	February 15, 1895	Resigned	1912
Reëlected	December 30, 1912	Term Expired	1917
Reëlected	January 7, 1919		
Frank T. Bradley	July 5, 1901	Resigned	1913
Charles W. Cooke	July 5, 1901	Term Expired	1918
Joseph Lee	December 30, 1913	Resigned	1915
Albert B. Plant	December 30, 1912	Term Expired	1915
L. M. Barker	February 4, 1913	Term Expired	1915
Harry G. Cooke	April 6, 1915	Term Expired	1916
Reëlected	January 6, 1918		
William E. Hitchcock	January, 1916		
Abbott Page	January 23, 1917	Resigned	1919
Raymond Prann	January 7, 1919		

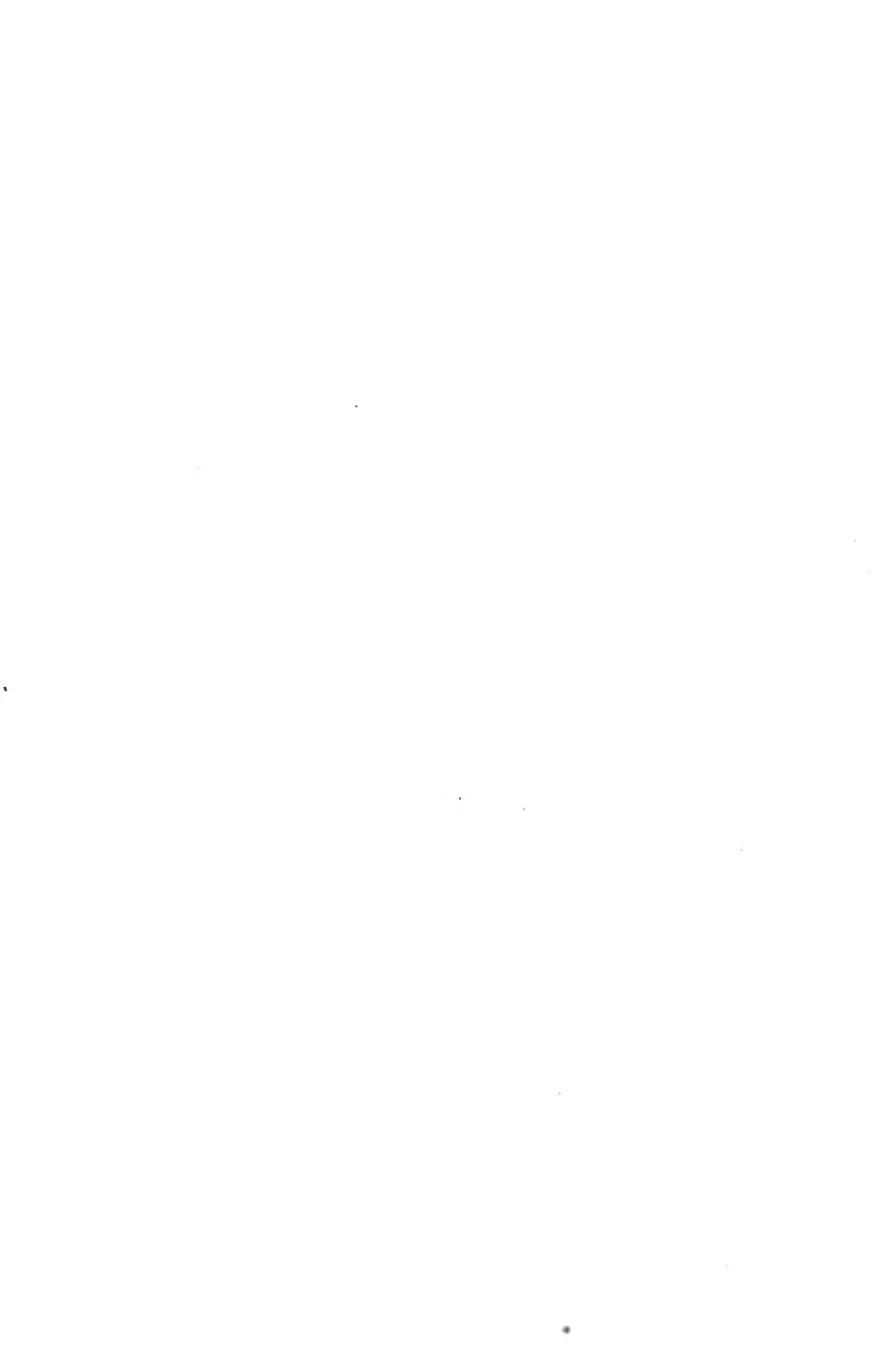










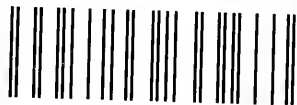








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